

# 50 Years of Palestinian Political History 1967-2017



## Introduction: The June 1967 War

In early 1967, the State of Israel, established less than two decades previously, commenced a concerted drive to escalate tensions on the Syrian border. According to Defense Minister Moshe Dayan: "It went this way: We would send a tractor to plow some place... in the demilitarized zone, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance further, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then, we would use artillery and later the air force... that's how it was."<sup>1</sup> In April 1967, Israeli jets shot down six Syrian planes over Damascus, and a month later, the Israeli army's Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin threatened, in a newspaper interview, to conquer Damascus.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, feeling obliged to make a show of strength and act on Egypt's defense pact with Syria,<sup>2</sup> deployed troops in the Sinai and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. The US saw no sign of any imminent Arab invasion, but said that in any event, Israel would "whip the hell out of them," and pledged to re-arm it in a post-war scenario.<sup>3</sup> Israel acted on 5 June, attacking Egypt's air force on the ground and annihilating it within two hours. When Syrian and Jordanian forces engaged from the east, their air forces met a similar fate. Some 400 planes were destroyed in a single day. In the five subsequent days, the eastern front was defeated. While the attack on the Sinai was well planned, the occupation of other territories was not,<sup>4</sup> but as soon as intelligence reports revealed that King Hussein had ordered his troops back across the River Jordan, Israel seized the West Bank, and Dayan bypassed the Chief of Staff to order the Golan offensive hours after Syria had requested a ceasefire. Later, Dayan would call his adventurism a failure of duty, while Prime Minister Eshkol called him a "vile man".<sup>5</sup>

The war, during which Israel razed entire Palestinian villages to the ground (Imwas, Yalo and Bayt Nuba in the Latrun area) along with the Moroccan Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, and added some 300,000 Palestinians to the refugee population it had created in 1948, had brought Israel massive unexpected gains on all fronts, prompting Eshkol to proclaim "a new reality in the Mideast."<sup>6</sup> Following the cessation of hostilities on 10 June, Israeli forces had occupied Syria's Golan Heights, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip, gaining control over 90,000 km<sup>2</sup> of territories. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) called on Israel to comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention and to allow the "return of those inhabitants who have fled."<sup>7</sup> Israel did neither.

### CONTENTS

Introduction: The June 1967 War .....	1
(1) The Shock of Defeat (1967-1970) .....	2
(2) 'Sumud' - Steadfastness (1970-1982) .....	4
(3) From Military Confrontation to Political Dialogue (1982-1987) .....	6
(4) The First Intifada (1987-1990) .....	8
(5) Negotiations (Madrid, Washington & Moscow) (1991 -1993) .....	11
(6) The Oslo Channel (1993) .....	13
(7) Interim Agreements (1994-1999) .....	15
(8) Camp David II & the Second Intifada (2000-2004) .....	17
(9) Disengagement to Resumption of Direct Negotiations (2005-2010).....	19
(10) The UN Bid & Other Tracks (2011-2017) .....	21

<sup>1</sup> Shlaim, Avi, *The Iron Wall - Israel and the Arab World*, London: Penguin Press, 2000, pp. 240. "Dayan's admissions were only published with a permission of his daughter in 1997, 16 years after his death. Dayan estimated that over 80% of all instances on the Syrian border leading up to the war were instigated this way." *Ibid*.

<sup>2</sup> In a speech, in 1982, Menachem Begin summarized Israel's position as follows: "In June 1967, we had another opportunity. The concentration of Egyptian troops in Sinai was not evidence of Nasr readiness to attack us. We have to be honest with ourselves, we decided to attack him." <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2010/07/04/israels-attack-on-egypt-in-june-67-was-not-preemptive/>

<sup>3</sup> President Johnson to Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban on 23 May 1967. Thomas, Baylis. *How Israel was Won: A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*: Maryland, Lexington, 1999, p. 162. Since the withdrawal agreement following the Suez War, the US was technically responsible for guaranteeing Israel's right of passage through the Straits of Tiran - the *casus belli* Israel presented for its attack. Already engaged in the Vietnam War, the US was unwilling to open another front, but gave Israel the green light to go alone.

<sup>4</sup> Commander of the Israeli Air Force General Mordechai Hod later acknowledged that, "[s]ixteen years' planning went into those initial 80 minutes... we lived the plan, we slept the plan, we ate the plan. Constantly we perfected it." Hadawi, Sami, *Bitter Harvest - Palestine between 1914-1967*, New World Press, 1967, pp. 227-229.

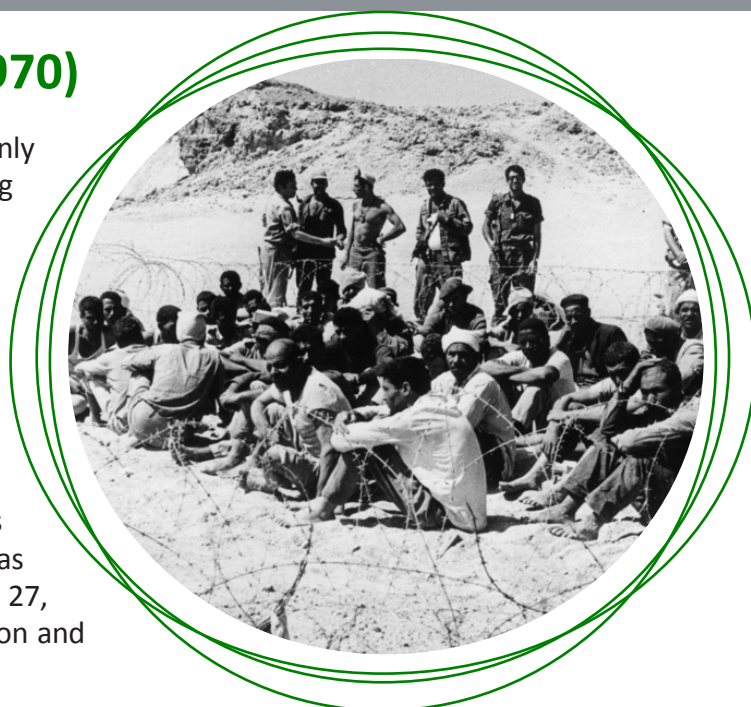
<sup>5</sup> Shlaim, Avi, *The Iron Wall*, *op.cit.*, pp. 248-249. Shlaim explained the war's expansionism and Israel's territorial greed simply with "appetite comes with eating." In response to the seizure of the Golan, the USSR, which had supported Syria's call for a ceasefire, severed ties with Israel and, in subsequent years, hardened its policy toward Israel considerably.

<sup>6</sup> Hadawi, Sami, *Bitter Harvest*, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>7</sup> UNSC Resolution 237 of 14 June 1967. UNSC Resolution 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from [the] "territories occupied in the recent conflict" was passed later, on 22 November 1967.

## 1. The Shock of Defeat (1967-1970)

Israel's preemptive attack on 5 June 1967 was not only devastating to the Arab forces, but a humiliating defeat - *Naksa* in Arabic, meaning 'setback'- for Arab nationalism as well. For Palestinians, it was a second *Nakba* ('catastrophe'- referring originally to the War of 1948, where approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and into exile) with a further 300,000 becoming refugees and some 1.3 million finding themselves under Israeli military occupation. Those who remained in 1967 were spread across two areas: the West Bank-which includes East Jerusalem- and the Gaza Strip, together known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). On June 27, 1967, Israel adopted a law extending its law, jurisdiction and administration to the OPT, including East Jerusalem.



Following the war, roads, markets, hotels, cinemas and most neighborhoods in the West Bank and East Jerusalem became deserted, as the native Palestinian population faced expulsion and imprisonment, confiscation of property, travel bans, water and electricity cuts, and a new system of military orders and permits, at the hands of their occupiers. Meanwhile, the Israeli army declared the Gaza Strip, which also struggled with a new influx of refugees, a closed military area and assumed control of land and water there.

Initially, there was a general sense of confidence that the military occupation would be a short-lived, as it had previously been in Gaza in 1956-1957. Palestinians therefore reacted with a policy of non-cooperation with the occupiers, and called for an end to the Israeli occupation, along with a return to the *status quo-ante* after rectifying relations with Jordan.<sup>8</sup> In Jerusalem, Islamic *Waqf* (Trust) officials succeeded in securing Moshe Dayan's agreement to respect the *status quo* of the day-to-day administration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>9</sup> In return, non-Muslims were allowed to visit but not to pray at the site. However, Dayan proclaimed full authority over the Western/Al-Buraq Wall and plaza, the expansion of which came at the expense of 135 Palestinian homes and two mosques in the adjacent Mughrabi Quarter, which were razed to the ground.

For Israel, the initial post-war reaction was one of uncertainty as to what to do with the newly conquered territories. Speaking at a think-tank meeting in July 1967, David Ben-Gurion, one of the founding fathers of Israel, "warned his listeners against the euphoria that swept the Jewish World in the aftermath of the six day war... and insisted that all the territories that had been captured had to be given back, very soon, for holding them would distort, and might ultimately destroy the Jewish state."<sup>10</sup> He added that "Israel should not relinquish control of the whole of Jerusalem... and not expect immediate peace with the Arabs, but "give back the territories very soon in return for a workable self armistice arrangement."<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Rabbi Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz described the idea of Greater Israel as a "monstrosity" in his 1968 essay *The Territories*. "A state ruling a hostile population of 1.5-2 million foreigners will necessarily become a secret police state... The corruption characteristic of every colonial regime will also prevail in the State of Israel."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Published on October 4, 1967, by national activists, West Bank mayors, and heads of Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>9</sup> When on August 15, 1967, Israeli army Chaplain Rabbi Shlomo Goren led a group of 50 Jews into the compound to perform prayers, Dayan sharply criticized the provocation and Rabbi Ovadia Yousef of the Rabbinical Court ruled that Jews are forbidden to enter the 'Temple Mount'/Al-Haram Ash-Sharif Compound and even helicopters may not circle above it because of the divine presence there. Furthermore, Haredi and religious Zionist Rabbis issued an explicit blanket prohibition against Jews assenting to it. However, a first attempt by Jews to pray at the site occurred on August 18, 1969 and a day later Al-Aqsa Mosque was set on fire by Australian Jew Denis Michael Rohan in order to destroy it and "rebuild" a Jewish temple, triggering widespread protests throughout the OPT.

<sup>10</sup> Hertzberg, Arthur, "Israel: the Tragedy of Victory," *The New York Review of Books*, May 28, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in *100 Years of Palestinian History*, Jerusalem: PASSIA, December 2001, p. 128.

As a 'solution' to this 'problem, the Labor Party's political platform promoted the "Jordanian Option", considering the Palestinians in the OPT as Jordanian citizens, with Amman as their capital. Based on this idea, it adopted a political plan in mid-1968, known as the Allon Plan<sup>13</sup>, which pushed for creating facts on the ground by confiscating land in the OPT and building Jewish settlements.

Adding to this concept, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan envisioned open bridges over the Jordan River to provide Palestinians access to the Arab World with two intentions in mind: the use of the workers' remittances for the Israeli economy, and encouraging emigration by not permitting their return for nine months but limiting their stay/work abroad to a maximum of three years (otherwise they would lose their right of residence in the OPT).

While the Allon Plan was never officially endorsed by the Israeli government, and King Hussein of Jordan rejected the notion; it nevertheless formed a conceptual basis for successive Israeli governments, who continued to develop and further Israel's settlement enterprise until the present day.

On a regional level, the Arab League, at its September 1967 summit in Khartoum, called for continued struggle to eliminate the effects of Israeli aggression and for an immediate withdrawal from the lands Israel had occupied, while ruling out the possibility of recognizing, negotiating or making peace with Israel. Meanwhile, in the wider international arena, the UN Security Council endorsed Resolution 242 (November 22, 1967), calling for "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict..." and affirming the necessity "for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem" and for "guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area."<sup>14</sup>

In March 1968, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) forces, led by Fateh and supported by the Jordanian Army, confronted Israeli troops in their first major battle at Karameh, in the Jordan Valley. They succeeded in halting a planned Israeli military incursion there and, soon after, the PLO amended its National Charter for the first time, endorsing armed resistance as a legitimate means in their struggle against Israel.

In February 1969, during the 5<sup>th</sup> Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting in Cairo, a new PLO Executive Committee was elected, with Fateh Leader Yasser Arafat as its Chairman, and the PLO embraced all resistance groups, trade unions, youth organizations and independent personalities.

Later that year, US Secretary of State William Rogers and his team - Joseph Sisco and Roy Alkerton - introduced the first international initiative to settle the conflict. After consulting with Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Ambassador to Washington at that time, as well as with Egyptian and Jordanian officials, they introduced the "Rogers Plan". This plan, which went through a number of revisions, proposed a timetable for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, indirect talks, and a "fair solution" to the refugee problem, but included neither a state nor any other form of self-determination for the Palestinians. The Israeli government of Golda Meir rejected the plan immediately. The PLO condemned it. The Jordanians showed willing to negotiate the idea, while Egypt rejected the initial plan, but agreed to a ceasefire proposed by the 'second' Rogers Plan, which came into effect on August 7, 1970.

In September 1970, the Jordanian Army entered into military confrontation with PLO factions based in Jordan over sovereignty issues, which left some 2,000 (mainly Palestinians) dead and resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan.

<sup>13</sup> The plan - named after its mastermind, Yigal Allon, who became Deputy Prime Minister in 1968 and who had introduced it as early as July 1967 - was based on the premise of maximizing the amount of land annexed to Israel while minimizing the inclusion of Palestinian inhabitants. It saw the Jordan River as Israel's secure border with Jordan and suggested a 15-20 km "security strip" in the Jordan Valley. Allon himself had originally been a proponent of what became known as the "Palestinian Option", i.e. Palestinian autonomy in limited areas of the West Bank, but changed his position in 1968.

<sup>14</sup> UNSC Resolution 242. Available from: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>.

## 2. 'Sumud' - Steadfastness (1970-1982)

During the second phase, between 1970 and 1982, the strategy adopted by the Palestinians was one of steadfastness or '*sumud*'. *Sumud* refers to the idea of standing firm by one's position and rights. On a practical level, it meant keeping civil society and its institutions functioning and developing, while, at the same time, waiting for a solution to come from the outside - either internationally (through the UN or individual superpowers) or regionally (through Arab states and/or the PLO).

The development of the 'internal' leadership during this period was characterized by the demise of local notables with close ties to Jordan, the rise of a national front, and the formation of the National Guidance Committee (combining most national groups and forces). Some leaders in the OPT believed in "salvation" from outside but were divided on how to achieve a solution. Some, such as Qadri Tuqan of Nablus, called for a liberation struggle rather than political negotiations, others, like Hamdi Taji Faruqi of Ramleh, advocated the acceptance of a Palestinian state based on the 1947 UN Partition Plan<sup>15</sup>, a proposal condemned by the PLO, whose leadership was now based in Beirut.



A second group of leaders advocated a struggle from within. This strategy was primarily promoted by elected mayors: the pragmatists Elias Freij (Bethlehem), Sheikh Ali Jabari (Hebron) and Rashad Shawwa (Gaza), all interested in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for negotiations; the moderates Fahed Qawasmeh (Hebron) and Hilmi Hanon (Tulkarem) strongly supporting the PLO; and the hard-line nationalists Bassam Shaka'a (Nablus), Karim Khalaf (Ramallah) and Ibrahim Tawil (Al-Bireh), who called for internal action by boycotting Israeli military rule and establishing the 'National Guidance Committee' for the OPT to implement the PLO's resistance strategy on the ground.

The 'external' leadership meanwhile, was busy reestablishing itself in Lebanon, where it had moved after its recent expulsion from Jordan<sup>16</sup>. Lebanon had quickly become the new base from which PLO operations against Israel and worldwide Israeli targets were launched.

In these early years of occupation, Israeli authorities ordered the expropriation of huge amounts of Palestinian land, largely in and around Jerusalem, to make way for the establishment and expansion of Jewish settlements. This involved large-scale demolitions of Palestinian houses as well as excavations under the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Meanwhile, Israeli military forces arrested hundreds of young Palestinians. In this way, Israeli prisons became Palestinian educational, national and political institutions graduating generations of Palestinian activists.

<sup>15</sup> After a five-year transitory phase with the OPT under the protection of the UN and the Arab League.

<sup>16</sup> Following civil war-like military confrontations between the Jordanian army and Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan, after PFLP commandos hijacked four airplanes and King Hussein feared PLO attempts to create a 'state within a state.'

This period also saw the first broad protest denouncing Israeli injustice and oppression against the Palestinians in Israel itself (those who managed to remain in their homes during the 1948 War) culminating in mass demonstrations in the Galilee. These demonstrations were sparked by the confiscation of Palestinian lands on March 30, 1976, during which the Israeli army killed six people, injured dozens more and arrested over 300 others. Since then, the day is commemorated annually as Land Day (*Yom Al-Ard*).

In a speech to the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*) in December 1977, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin called for an end to the military occupation, proposing an autonomy plan. According to this proposal, an elected Palestinian “administrative council” would be responsible for civil matters (e.g. education, transportation, commerce, health, etc.), while Israel would maintain control of security and public order. Palestinians could accept either Israeli or Jordanian citizenship. Palestinians rejected the plan as it only offered limited autonomy, as opposed to self-determination.

Defense Minister Ariel Sharon installed a separate Civil Administration in the West Bank, which was incorporated in the 1978 Camp David Accords to replace the military government Israel had established in 1967. One of its first acts was to close down Arab newspapers, as well as Birzeit University, while deposing Palestinian mayors, dissolving the National Guidance Committee, and establishing the so-called ‘Village Leagues’ in their stead. Equipped with municipal functions and meant to establish a counterforce to the PLO, the Village Leagues were widely seen as collaborationist and never really challenged the PLO.

While Palestinian resistance and military confrontation with Israel continued during this phase, Palestinians “inside” and “outside” also began accepting the challenge of meeting Israelis in order to clarify each other’s positions, interests and needs, as a starting point towards a political settlement. During the later stage of the *sumud* phase, Palestinians increasingly voiced their desire for a peaceful solution based on coexistence and mutual recognition. Among the early advocates of a two-state solution were the PLO representatives Said Hamami (London), Izz Eddin Al-Qalakh (Paris) and Naim Khader (Brussels), who were all assassinated by Israel between 1978 and 1981. Palestinian leaders in the OPT also became targets during these years, culminating in bombing attacks by the extremist settler movement Gush Emunim against three West Bank mayors in June 1980, heavily wounding them.

Diplomatic achievements during the *sumud* years included the recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 3210 of 14 October 1974, which also granted observer status) and by the Arab League two weeks later; the November 13, 1974 address of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat at the UN General Assembly in New York; and the granting of access to the UN Security Council for the PLO in 1975.

Internationally, the Camp David conference between US President Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Begin and Egyptian President Sadat in September 1978, resulted in an Israeli-Egyptian framework for peace with the restoration of Sinai to Egypt, and a framework agreement on negotiations towards a five-year autonomy regime in the OPT.

Regionally, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd proposed, in August 1981, his 8-Point Peace Plan to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the creation of a Palestinian state and Arab recognition of Israel’s right to exist. However, with the June 6, 1982 invasion of Israel into Lebanon to destroy the PLO, and the latter’s subsequent exodus to Tunis, this phase of the conflict came to an end.

## 3. From Military Confrontation to Political Dialogue (1982-1987)

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and subsequent three-month siege of Beirut ended with the PLO's expulsion and its relocation to Tunis. Israel's stated goal was, in the words of then-Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, to drive the PLO out and "clear the way for Israel to a settlement with 'moderate' West Bank Palestinians." The invasion resulted in thousands of Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian casualties, mostly civilians, and the displacement of tens of thousands of others. It also included the notorious massacre in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.<sup>17</sup>

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), meanwhile, Israel maintained total control over the land and the people, largely governing without respect for international law or resolutions. One major breach of international law concerned the continued building of settlements for Jewish Israeli citizens within the OPT.<sup>18</sup> Between 1983 and 1989, the total Israeli settlement population in the occupied territories grew from 100,000 to 190,000<sup>19</sup>, representing the entrenchment of a military occupation which should have been temporary, thereby making it increasingly irreversible.



Incidents of rioting and violence in the OPT became more frequent from January 1982 onwards, resulting in hundreds of arrests, detentions and curfews, dozens of school closures, expulsion of PLO supporters,<sup>20</sup> and fines worth millions of shekels. Palestinian universities became increasingly targeted by the occupying authorities and were closed for extensive periods.

Several new peace initiatives were presented in 1982, all acknowledging Palestinian autonomy and Israeli security concerns in varying forms, but most were met with reservations:

- The **Reagan Plan** (1 September 1982) urging "self-rule" for Palestinians in a homeland linked to Jordan, as well as a halt to Jewish settlements in the OPT.<sup>21</sup>
- The Arab League's **Fez Plan** (9 September 1982), based on the 8-Point Peace Plan from Saudi Crown Prince Fahd (later to be king), which called, *inter alia*, for Israeli withdrawal from all

<sup>17</sup> The massacre occurred when then-Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Israeli army chief of staff Rafael Eitan allowed the Israeli-supported Christian Phalange militia, under the leadership of Elie Hobeika, to enter the Sabra and Shatila camps on 16-18 September, where they massacred Palestinian civilians, mainly women, children, and old men. According to Israeli figures 800 were killed, while the Red Cross (ICRC) reported 2,700 casualties. Later, the Israeli government's Kahan Commission found Sharon, Eitan, and others "indirectly responsible", while an international inquiry commission led by former UN Assistant Secretary-General Sean MacBride held Israel, as Occupying Power, directly responsible for planning and allowing the Phalange's murdering. Nevertheless, no one in Lebanon or Israel was prosecuted for the massacres. The massacre's anniversary is commemorated in Palestine and other Arab states.

<sup>18</sup> The transfer, by the Occupying Power, of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies is forbidden by the fourth Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), Article 49, and classified as a War Crime according to Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In addition, numerous UN resolutions, including Security Council Resolutions 252, 267, 298, 446, 452, 465, 471, 476, 478, 605, 1515 and 2334 attest to international consensus on this issue.

<sup>19</sup> *Foundation for Middle East Peace*, 'Israeli settler population 1972-2006'. No data were available for 1982 and 1987. Available online: [https://web.archive.org/web/20081118071827/http://fmep.org/settlement\\_info/settlement-info-and-tables/stats-data/israeli-settler-population-1972-2006](https://web.archive.org/web/20081118071827/http://fmep.org/settlement_info/settlement-info-and-tables/stats-data/israeli-settler-population-1972-2006).

<sup>20</sup> Including over 50 teachers refusing to sign anti-PLO pledges in return for work permits.

<sup>21</sup> Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Begin and Foreign Minister Shamir criticized the Reagan proposal for its settlement freeze and for using the word 'homeland'.

occupied territories, removal of all settlements, establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>22</sup>

- The **Brezhnev Plan** (14 September 1982), asking Arafat to reject the Reagan Plan, affirming support for the PLO and presenting a six-point plan for the Middle East conflict which included the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.
- The **Arafat-King Hussein agreement** (11 February 1985), formulating a common approach towards a Middle East peace accord<sup>23</sup>, which called for the exchange of 'land for peace' within the context of an international conference and a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. Israeli officials rejected the proposal the next day.
- A **Palestinian-Israeli declaration** (1986) in favor of an international conference, initiated by Knesset member Abba Eban and PLO delegates Hanna Siniora and Fayez Abu Rahmeh (both named as members of the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation). The declaration referred to the Palestinian and Jewish peoples' destiny to live side by side and called for negotiations, an end to violence and terrorism, a "legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and mutual recognition of national rights. The external leadership in Tunis rejected the proposal.
- The **London Document** (11 April 1987) presented draft guidelines for a political settlement with Jordan, based on talks between Shimon Peres and King Hussein in London. It also called for negotiations based on UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 and an international conference with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. However, the US, Peres and King Hussein were all reluctant to present the plan publicly as a Jordanian-Israeli initiative.
- The **Amirav-Nusseibeh Document** (July 1987) was the result of meetings between Herut Party member Moshe Amirav and Sari Nusseibeh, Salah Zuharka and later Faisal Hussein. The meetings were initiated by David Ish'Shalom, author of 'Fear and Hope', in which he suggested the establishment of a Palestinian unarmed entity in the OPT under the ruling of the PLO. This 'channel' of negotiations was highly controversial in both countries and did not achieve tangible results.

Nevertheless, Arab-Israeli diplomatic contacts continued, as did attempts to establish dialogue between the external PLO leadership and Israelis, the latter being mainly liberal-minded politicians and professionals who were opposed to their government's policies vis-à-vis the OPT, but not in the position to change them.<sup>24</sup>

Most of these meetings were held outside of the OPT, such as the private bilateral meeting between Oxford historian Walid Al-Khalidi and Israeli former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, or that of Palestinian academics with their European and American Jewish counterparts during 1984-1986, even after the Israeli Knesset banned such meetings in August 1986. The majority of these encounters did not commit either side but called for an end to violence, for negotiations, and a peaceful solution. On the ground, the dissent among the people on both sides remained, leading to some harsh reactions: Yitzhak Shamir ousted Moshe Amirav from the Likud party; Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered the arrest of Faisal Hussein; and professor Sari Nusseibeh was attacked by Birzeit University students. These events marked a new political awakening in Palestinian society, based on the strong sense that the *status quo* could no longer be accepted.

<sup>22</sup> The PNC endorsed the plan at its 16<sup>th</sup> session in Algiers in February 1983, while Israel and some PLO factions rejected it.

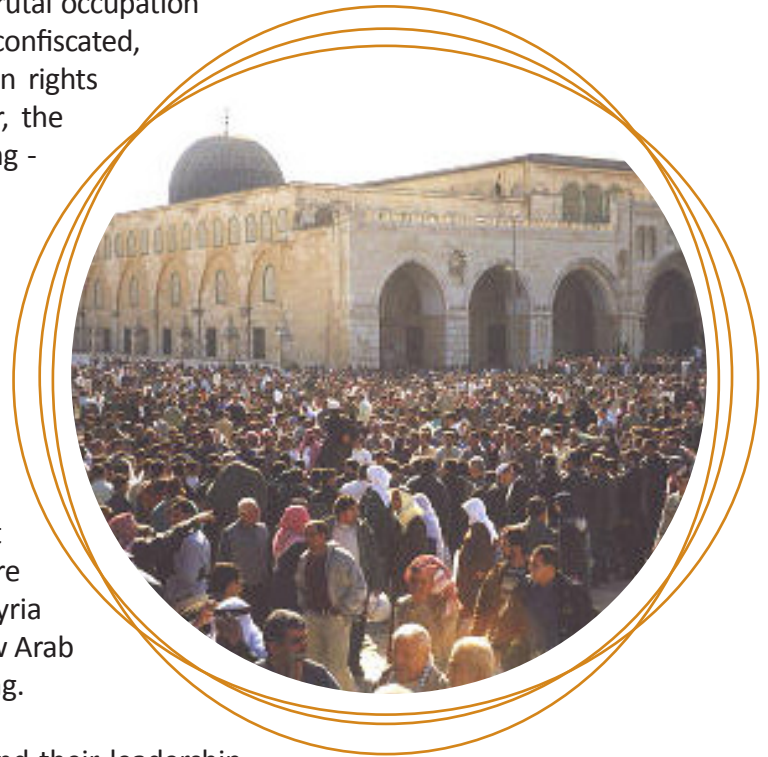
<sup>23</sup> The preceding 17<sup>th</sup> PNC in Amman (22-19 November 1984) had called for a Palestinian-Jordanian initiative for peace talks based on 'land for peace' and Palestinian self-determination.

<sup>24</sup> Among them were Ari Elyaf, Uri Avnery, Aharon Cohen, Mattiyahu Peled and Ora Namir.

## 4. The First Intifada (1987-1990)

Twenty years after the June War of 1967, Israel's brutal occupation practices continued unabated, more land was being confiscated, settlements expanded, and the violation of human rights had become part of people's daily lives. However, the Palestine Question was – at least for the time being – off the international and regional agendas.

The international arena witnessed a new chapter of cooperation between the superpowers of the US (Ronald Reagan) and the USSR (Mikhail Gorbachev), when they signed their first treaty to reduce nuclear weapons arsenals in December 1987. Regionally, the November 1987 Arab Summit in Amman marked the beginning of Arab rapprochement: Egypt was invited for the first time since signing the Camp David Accords, there were attempts towards reconciliation between Syria (Hafiz Assad) and Iraq (Saddam Hussein), and a new Arab council for economic cooperation was in the making.



Palestinians outside the OPT were marginalized and their leadership isolated, while those inside the OPT had reached a stage of hopelessness, desperation and anger which made them feel that they had nothing to lose. Meron Benvenisti, former Israeli “Deputy Mayor” of Jerusalem put it this way: “under the most optimistic conditions, the Palestinians can aspire to hold their ground in the territories”.<sup>25</sup>

The spark which channeled people's frustration and anger towards confronting the military occupation was ignited in Gaza on December 9, 1987, when an Israeli truck ran into a group of Palestinian workers, killing four and injuring several others. The stone that was thrown at the Israeli driver became henceforth the symbol and tool for challenging the occupiers.

The Palestinians decided not to “wait” any longer for a solution from outside to “save” them and end the occupation. Instead they began to employ a series of creative methods to resist the occupation, and the first *Intifada* (uprising) was born.

The aim of the *Intifada* was to change the *status quo*, i.e. end Israeli occupation and to build a new self-reliant society in the OPT, and to lead it towards freedom, independence and statehood. In order to fulfill this aim, three broad methods were adopted:

- 1) Direct confrontation with the military occupiers: using stones, burned tires, commercial strikes, demonstrations, graffiti on the walls and political leaflets covering weekly programs.
- 2) The Palestinization of the society: renaming places, changing the summer and winter time to differ it from Israeli time, boycotting Israeli goods, refusing to pay taxes to the Israeli authorities, and not abiding by Israeli orders and laws.
- 3) The elaboration of a political program: published as the “Fourteen Points” on January 14, 1988 in Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Benvenisti, Meron, “The Peace Process and the Intercommunal Strive”, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Autumn 1987), p.10.

<sup>26</sup> Sicherman, Harvey, *Palestinian Autonomy, Self-Government and Peace*. Colorado, 1993, p. 163-5. Available from: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PalestinianAutonomySelfGovernmentandPeace.pdf>.



The sudden uprising came as a surprise to both the Israeli leadership as well as the external Palestinian leadership. Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin described the situation as “ordinary disturbances which will come to an end within days,” while the Palestinian leadership hoped that the *Intifada* would last.<sup>27</sup> They engineered a strategy of civil disobedience - known as Khalil Al-Wazir’s (Abu Jihad) “Jerusalem Document” of 8 February 1988 - and the internal leadership began organizing itself as the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU). The public followed its directives and formed public committees to run Palestinian affairs, including education, health, social welfare, economy and infrastructure.

Several mediators rushed to the scene with suggestions and ideas on how to avoid a further escalation of the conflict. The first initiative came from Cairo in January 1988, calling for a six-month “truce” in the OPT in exchange for a freeze on building settlements, thus allowing time to prepare for an international peace conference.

The second initiative came from US Secretary of State George Shultz, who, in March 1988, proposed that Israel suspend its settlement activities and the Palestinians their *Intifada*, and to begin negotiations immediately - based largely on the provisions of the Camp David Accords but with Palestinian self-rule to be achieved after one year instead of five. Both Israeli Prime Minister Shamir and the Palestinian internal delegation opposed the plan.

Other mediators were equally unsuccessful; Israeli General Abraham Tamir sought a meeting with Arafat’s aide Bassam Abu Sharif, but the encounter did not materialize.<sup>28</sup> The USSR entered the arena with Mikhail Gorbachev openly encouraging PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to recognize Israel’s right to exist in April 1988.<sup>29</sup>

On April 16, 1988, Khalil Al-Wazir was assassinated by Israeli agents at his residence in Tunis. Palestinians found themselves at a crossroads, faced with three options for the future direction of their *Intifada*: (1) to be “Arabized”, similar to the Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936 when Arab leaders took over the decision-making; (2) to be “militarized” by allowing those advocating armed resistance to take the lead and escalate the daily confrontations with the occupying forces; or (3) to remain an unarmed national struggle.

The internal leadership further discussed how to maintain the “Palestinization” of the struggle, favoring two initiatives: either issuing a declaration of independence and/or forming a provisional government-in-exile.<sup>30</sup> The external PLO leadership, meanwhile, began to publicly talk about political solutions. These included:

1. Establishing two states between the river and the sea, accepting, in principle, the State of Israel alongside a Palestinian state;
2. The readiness to negotiate with any Israeli official;
3. Conditioning negotiations - “the PLO is ready to sit down with Israel if it withdraws from the OPT.”<sup>31</sup>

At this point, the internal and external leaderships worked in parallel, emphasizing their respective concepts of a political solution. By late August 1988, Chairman Arafat had received nine drafts from the internal leaders calling for Palestinian national independence. Among these were the “Bassam Abu Sharif Document” in June 1988, which was endorsed by the internal leadership,<sup>32</sup> outlining a Palestinian vision for

<sup>27</sup> Nofal, Mahmoud, *The Story of the Oslo Agreement*. Amman, 1995, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Haikal, Mohammed Hassanen, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996, p. 384.

<sup>29</sup> *Washington Post*, April 11, 1988.

<sup>30</sup> The options were either to have leading figures from the Palestinian political detainees declare independence from within the prisons, or a group of leading personalities travel to Geneva declaring it there and announcing a provisional government in a press conference, or, to call for a public gathering at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem where a masked youth leader of the Intifada would declare it.

<sup>31</sup> Bassam Abu Sharif, Interview with ABC TV on April 26, 1988.

<sup>32</sup> PASSIA Meeting in Jerusalem, June 1988.

peace based on mutual recognition, and the “Faisal Hussein Document”, calling for a two-state solution and the declaration of Palestinian independence, based on UN Resolution 181.<sup>33</sup>

In the third year of the *Intifada*, the internal leadership called for the reformation of the PNC through elections based on proportional representation and for the formation of a provisional government as a means to help legitimize and normalize the idea of independence, comparing it to the experience of the Jewish Agency that had become the provisional government of Israel in 1948. However, both the US and Russia strongly objected the idea and also the external PLO leadership was reluctant, fearing that it would transform the PLO from a liberation movement to a quasi-government for which they were not yet prepared.

The Palestinian internal leadership, meanwhile, advocated a policy of establishing contacts and dialogue with the Israelis in order to influence Israeli public opinion and to build an understanding of the Palestinian call for freedom and independence. They began publishing articles in Israeli media, appeared on Israeli TV, and addressed Israeli audiences in public forums. On August 2, 1990, delegations from the Palestinian and Israeli mainstream<sup>34</sup> met at the Notre Dame Hotel in Jerusalem to sign a joint statement which included mutual recognition and the call for direct negotiations. However, on the same day Iraq invaded Kuwait, marking the beginning of the Gulf crisis; at which point the Israeli delegation “declared divorce” and refrained from signing the document.



<sup>33</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, August 12, 1988.

<sup>34</sup> The Palestinian delegation included Sari Nusseibeh, Faisal Hussein, Hanan Ashrawi, Ziad Abu Zayyad, Mamdouh Aker, the Israeli delegation Yossi Beilin, Dedi Zucker, Yael Dayan, Yossi Sarid, Haim Ramon, Naomi Chazan.

## 5. Negotiations (Madrid, Washington & Moscow, 1991-1993)

In October 1991, peace negotiations eventually commenced in Madrid, although the atmosphere was not ideal: the repercussions of the Gulf War, a divided Arab World and the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc all played a role. The Palestinians and their leadership were under siege – both in the OPT as well as in the Diaspora. Meanwhile, the US was pushing an agenda promoting ‘land for peace’ based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

Inside the OPT, Palestinians were confronted with Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens’ policy of dividing the West Bank and Gaza into tiny cantons or enclaves, isolating Jerusalem, suppressing the Palestinian leadership and imposing a media black-out, while expediting land confiscation and settlement building. Settlers gained increasing power, steadily becoming a significant third authority after the government and the army.



Four years of the *Intifada* led to social and economic suffering and a decline in the standard of living. This ran parallel to the decrease of international support for Palestinian organizations, and their subsequent loss of authority and effectiveness, leaving them with very limited options.

Outside the OPT, Palestinians had to adjust to a series of far-reaching transformations, perhaps most significantly the fall of Communism and, with it, not only the end of Soviet Union aid and any hope of a military option, but also the rapid shift in the political positions of Eastern European states, including their recognition of Israel. At the same time, the decline of Arab government support, to a large extent due to Arafat’s backing of Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War resulted in a loss of financial support for the PLO as well as a loss of Palestinian influence in the Gulf countries. Increasingly, attempts were made to bypass the leadership of the PLO.

The State of Israel, in contrast, benefitted from the Gulf war in two ways: on the one hand, the War helped Israel to remain the strongest military power in the region, and on the other, it received huge financial assistance from world capitals, much of which was used to further its settlement enterprise.

Against this backdrop, US President George Bush, in an address to Congress on March 6, 1991, called for an international conference<sup>35</sup> to be based on the implementation of UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, the principle of ‘land for peace’, recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and security and peace for Israel.

Israel conditioned its attendance at the Madrid conference on the following demands regarding Palestinian participation: that there would be no independent Palestinian delegation, no Palestinians from Jerusalem, no PLO members, no Palestinian flag, and no recognition of a Palestinian state.

<sup>35</sup> Already back in 1985, Palestinian academic Walid Al-Khalidi had spoken out for such a forum, saying “There is no substitute for a general, political, regional, integrated, conceptual framework, and a multi-track, multi-issue approach ... with all the key protagonists: local, regional and global.” Al-Khalidi, Walid, “A Palestinian Perspective on the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Summer 1985, p. 46.

Palestinians accepted these conditions, recognizing that they were unable to prevent the invitees from going, or to change the terms of references. They could not afford to stay away from the negotiations or alienate European countries. Their hope was to be able to change these conditions through participation and to convince the other conference participants of the truth and justness of their cause and of the need to change the *status quo*, while allowing Palestinians to be on equal footing with Israelis on the world stage. Ultimately, the Palestinian delegation to Madrid was nominated by the PLO leadership in Tunis, which not everyone welcomed.

The talks continued in Washington, but turned into a diplomatic game. Palestinians eventually accepted a delegation consisting of 9 Palestinians and 2 Jordanians, which implied a transitional phase to end the occupation and form a national authority. However, the Israeli side was not interested in such a scenario; preferring to bypass the Palestinians and reach out Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon in an attempt to normalize its relations with the Arab world.

A second Palestinian delegation - made up of prominent activists from the OPT and the Diaspora - was formed for multilateral negotiations in Moscow.

After 22 months of bilateral talks in Washington, the Israelis presented the old autonomy plan as their vision for a transitional phase, during which 12 technical civil departments would gradually transfer from Israeli to Palestinian hands, the military would



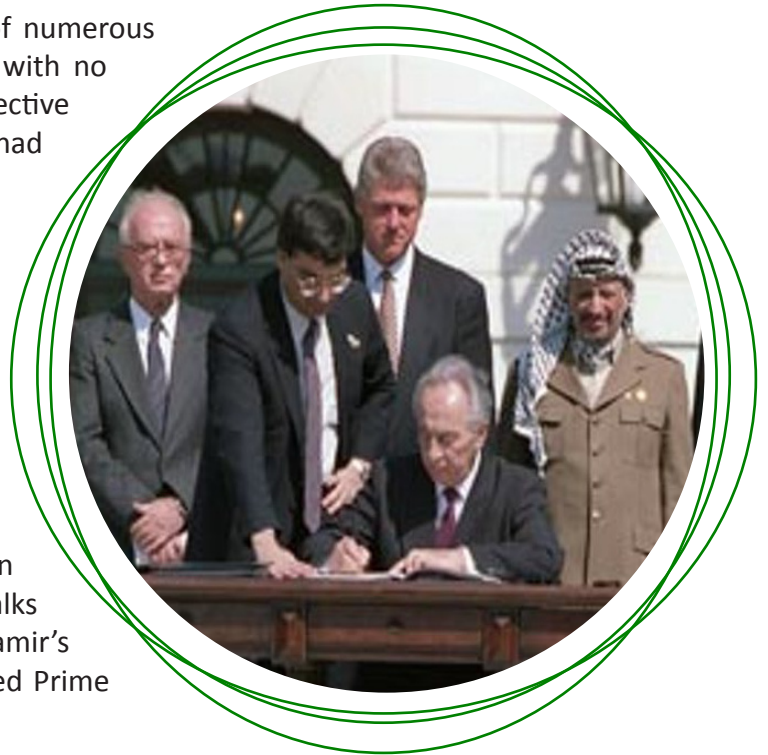
withdraw to prepare for Palestinian self-rule in only one-third of the OPT, and Palestinian rights on land, water, and Jerusalem would be recognized, but with no mention of political authority or sovereignty. Settlement activity would continue, and settlers would have a say in issues relating to the OPT. The proposal not only fell far short of what was acceptable to the Palestinian side, but also represented a retreat from Israeli positions laid down in the Camp David Accords, sending a message that Israel had no intention of leaving the OPT or recognizing Palestinian rights.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian side presented its own proposal based on PNC decisions and the Fourteen Points of the *Intifada*. The document, which became known as the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority (PISGA) Plan, called for a freeze on settlements, geographic integrity of the OPT, democratic elections and the necessary freedom to allow for self-government and socioeconomic development. It even detailed the responsibilities of the proposed authority. However, Israel was not willing to consider it and the negotiations soon reached a dead end, with no influential mediator to close the gap between the two sides.

## 6. The Oslo Channel (1993)

After nine months of negotiations in Madrid, five rounds of talks at the US State Department, and the exchange of numerous documents outlining the positions of both sides with no common ground to be found, and with no effective influence from any the mediators, a deadlock had seemingly been reached.

Strongly opposing any PLO role in the negotiations and insisting on a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, Israeli Prime Minister Shamir (of the Likud Party) sent messages to Amman proposing joint economic and tourist projects in the Red Sea area (Aqaba-Eilat) and reintroducing the old Likud plan for a Jordanian role on the West Bank – neither of which were taken seriously by Amman. Meanwhile, PLO Chairman Arafat attempted to open various back channels with the Labor Party,<sup>36</sup> but talks in Washington only resumed with the fall of Shamir’s government and coming to power of newly elected Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.



Realizing that whoever could deliver a negotiated agreement would likely head the future Palestinian government, Chairman Arafat and his inner cabinet began to worry about internal leaders such as the Head of the Palestinian delegation to Washington, Faisal Hussein, who was in direct contact with US Secretary of State James Baker and was received by President George Bush in the White House before the end of the eighth round of talks. At the same time, Syria’s support for radical Palestinian factions opposing Arafat’s leadership, King Hussein’s rising popularity, and growing internal opposition steered by recently founded movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad only added to the external leadership’s worries. To maintain his legitimacy as the official representative and leader of the Palestinian people Arafat thus realized the need to open other channels of negotiation and deliver results.

In a similar manner, Rabin and his inner cabinet realized that they would not reach any agreement with the “official” Palestinian delegation, headed by Faisal Hussein, which was too loyal to PLO positions, but would also need a strong and legitimate Palestinian leadership to run and control an interim authority in the OPT, which was also capable of containing the Islamic forces.

Thus the opportunity arose to open other channels of contacts between the PLO and the Rabin government, away from the official talks being held in Washington and led by the “insiders” Faisal Hussein and Hanan Ashrawi, who were also instructed by and reported directly to Arafat. There were four back channels: (1) indirect contacts with and through Cairo by Arafat himself and members of his inner cabinet; (2) contacts with and through Russia, proposed by PLO Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen); (3) meetings in Romania; and (4) talks instigated by Terje Larsen, founder of the Norwegian Institute for Applied Science.

<sup>36</sup> *Inter alia* by encouraging Faisal Hussein to meet with Shimon Peres, Yossi Beilin, Ephraim Sneh and others.

The fourth channel focused on the Gaza Strip due to its chronic social, economic and security problems and proposed 'Gaza First' as an initial step towards a comprehensive agreement. Initially, Terje Larsen had suggested that Israeli Labor politician Yossi Beilin, who considered Gaza a major problem<sup>37</sup>, discuss the issue with Faisal Husseini, which they did shortly before the Israeli elections in June 1992. However, after Beilin became Deputy Minister in the Rabin government and Husseini gained increasing media attention, the Israeli side realized that Arafat would not welcome such contacts with internal leaders.

Thus, Beilin gave green light to one of his academic colleagues, Yair Hirschfeld of Haifa University, to approach Ahmad Qrei'a (Abu Ala'), the PLO's financial expert, during multilateral meetings in London on December 3 and 4, 1992. Palestinian delegation members Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, together with the PLO representative in London, Afif Safieh, encouraged Qrei'a, as did PLO leaders in Tunis. The meeting became a watershed, marking the beginning of direct and secret negotiations between the PLO and Israel. However, from that point on, the external leadership made sure that the internal delegation (Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, Haidar Abdel Shafi, and others) would remain unaware of any further progress in the Oslo back channel,<sup>38</sup> which was supervised by Arafat, Abu Mazen and Abu Ala'. On the Israeli side, negotiators included Peres, with his close advisors<sup>39</sup>, and Beilin, with his academic team<sup>40</sup>. The Norwegian mediator facilitated the meetings with no intervention in their substance.

The Israeli agenda consisted of three main components, which reflected the fact that the Israeli side considered Oslo a "staged" test: (1) a partial and phased Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories, beginning with Gaza; (2) postponing the most difficult and complicated issues (i.e., Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, security, relations and cooperation with other neighbors) to a later stage of talks, when the final status of the OPT would be decided upon; and (3) building a strong foundation for economic cooperation.<sup>41</sup> The "Gaza-Jericho first" approach assured that the future of Palestinian autonomy would depend on Palestinian ability to develop an independent Palestinian state - or otherwise the territories would face a trend in the direction of scattered 'bantustans' with *de facto*-if not *de jure*-Israeli sovereignty<sup>42</sup>.

The Palestinian agenda, on the other hand, was shaped by four main notions: (1) that reaching an agreement would mean a historical breakthrough in terms of mutual recognition; (2) that the "Gaza-Jericho First" formula could serve as a marketing tool towards the public, as the proposed declaration of principles would establish an official, recognized PLO authority on Palestinian soil; (3) that separating the difficult issues from the easy ones was an opportunity to compromise later on; and (4) that a Palestinian-Israeli agreement would open the door for other agreements with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

The Norwegian intermediaries contributed a great deal to the Oslo channel, which led to the first ever handshake between Israeli and Palestinian top leaders on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993. The "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", which was signed that day, was, in essence, the exchange of "land for peace" and limited Palestinian self-rule during a transitional period until the final status talks would resolve the remaining issues and provide for a permanent settlement.

<sup>37</sup> Haikal, Mohammed Hassanen, *Secret Channels*, op.cit., p. 435.

<sup>38</sup> Abu Ala' later revealed that whenever Hirschfeld during the various stages of talks attempted to approach any Palestinian from inside the territories to pass a message, fly a testing balloon, or to comment on an issue, the PLO threatened the Israeli team to freeze the contacts or halt the talks.

<sup>39</sup> Uri Savir, Peres' press spokesman and later Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and Avi Gill, Peres' policy advisor.

<sup>40</sup> Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundik.

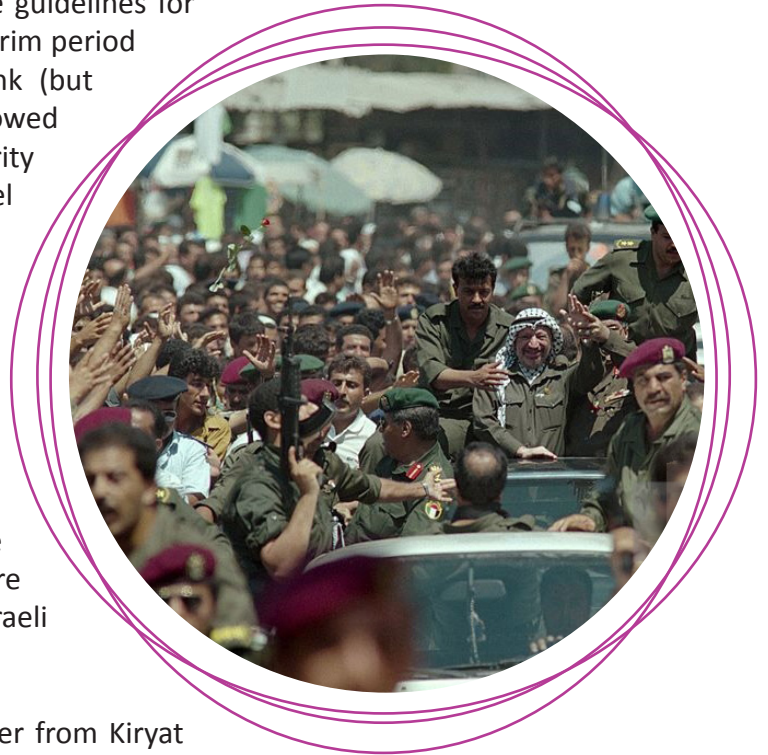
<sup>41</sup> Corbin, Jane, *Gaza First. The Secret Norway Channel to Peace between Israel and the PLO*. 1994, p. 57

<sup>42</sup> Warschawsky, Michel, "How the Intifada Led to the Oslo Agreement", *News From Within*, January 1994, p. 6.

## 7. Interim Agreements (1994-1999)

The Declaration of Principles (DoP) provided the guidelines for future negotiations, as well as for a five-year interim period of autonomy for Palestinians in the West Bank (but excluding East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip, followed by a permanent settlement based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. However, Israel replaced most of its negotiating team with military strategists and the DoP's implementation was negotiated in an entirely different atmosphere from that of the Oslo talks.

At Chairman Arafat's insistence, 'Gaza First' was expanded to 'Gaza-Jericho First', to afford the PLO a 'foothold' in the West Bank.<sup>43</sup> But Oslo's vagueness left the Israelis ample room to impose limitations on this, while the PLO faced more and more criticism for its powerlessness, as Israeli settlement building continued unabated.



On February 25, 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Kiryat Arba settlement, gunned down 19 Muslim worshippers at prayers in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron,<sup>44</sup> which prompted the PLO to suspend contacts until talks commenced on an agreement for the establishment of an unarmed civilian observer mission - Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH).<sup>45</sup>

The combined pressure of the US and donor countries brought the PLO back to the negotiating table but without any meaningful achievement. Nevertheless, and despite several Palestinian revenge attacks inside Israel,<sup>46</sup> negotiations continued and led first to the signing of the Protocol on Economic Relations in Paris on April 29, 1994 and of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, also known as Oslo I, in Cairo on May 4, 1994. Eight days later, the first Palestinian police forces entered the autonomous areas of Gaza and Jericho and, on July 1, Chairman Yasser Arafat returned to Palestine after almost 30 years of exile. However, the agreement soon drew criticism from across the Palestinian political spectrum<sup>47</sup> as it offered little promise of eventual statehood, while Israel remained in control over water, land use, zoning and any development project, and at the same time retained and continued to build settlements while further developing their infrastructure by linking them with bypass-roads, using 'security concerns' as a pretext.

In October 1994, Arafat, Rabin and Peres were awarded the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, and Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty. On December 26, 1994, the Knesset passed the Gaza-Jericho Agreement Implementation Law (Limiting of Activities) which prohibited Palestinian political activities in East

<sup>43</sup> Savir, Uri, *The Process. 1, 100 Days that Changed the Middle East*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> See "Report of Shamgar Commission of Inquiry into the Massacre of the Tomb of Patriarch inside the Muslim Holy Site", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 143-145.

<sup>45</sup> Reached in Cairo on 31 March 1994.

<sup>46</sup> In April 1994, bombings in Afula and Hadera left 14 Israelis dead and over 70 wounded.

<sup>47</sup> Palestinian academic Edward Said, among the most outspoken critics, said: "The PLO has the distinction of being the first national liberation movement in history to sign an agreement to keep an occupying power in place." E. Said, *Power, Politics and Culture. Interviews with Edward H. Said* (New York 2002) 396. Meron Benvenisti, then head of B'Tselem, called Oslo "an Israeli victory and a Palestinian defeat."

Jerusalem, contradicting the letter of assurance Peres had sent to Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst confirming that Israel would not hamper the activity of East Jerusalem institutions.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Jerusalem remained cut off from the rest of the OPT, denying thousands of Palestinians access to the city, thus depriving them from income, as well as medical, educational and economic services and the freedom of worship.

Although the Palestinian Authority's (PA) achievements remained mostly symbolic<sup>49</sup>, negotiations continued and on September 28, 1995, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (also known Oslo II Agreement) was signed in Washington. It extended Palestinian autonomy to other parts of the West Bank, which was divided into Area A (Palestinian civil jurisdiction and internal security), Area B (Palestinian civil jurisdiction, joint Israeli-Palestinian internal security), and Area C (Israeli civil and overall security control); provided for elections of a Palestinian Legislative Council; and set October 1997 as the target date for the completion of further redeployment as well as October 1999 for reaching a final status agreement.

However, anti-Oslo sentiments were on the rise. Israeli settlers and rightists mobilized against redeployment plans and incited against their leadership, peaking in the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a Jewish extremist on November 4, 1995. On the Palestinian side, an unprecedented wave of suicide attacks, triggered by Israel's January 5, 1996 assassination of Hamas activist Yahya Ayyash ('the Engineer') brought the Oslo process to a halt.

An urgently convened international summit on combating terrorism was held in Sharm Al-Sheikh on March 13, 1996, but failed to ease the tension, and, by the end of March, another deadline for Israeli withdrawal from Hebron had passed. Nevertheless, the PNC voted in May to amend the PLO covenant in accordance with the Oslo stipulations. This, however, was followed by a further setback in the form of the Benjamin Netanyahu, who won the Israeli elections at the end of May 1996 and whose Likud Party made no secret of the fact that it disregarded the spirit of the Oslo Accords, including the 'land-for-peace principle', and did not shy away from escalations, as proven with the inauguration of a tunnel under the Al-Haram Ash-Sharif compound in September 1996, triggering violent clashes all over the OPT, and then the announcement of plans to construct a new settlement (Har Homa) at Jabal Abu Ghneim in February 1997. Despite these actions, Israel continued to enjoy US backing throughout the whole period.

By 1998, the Jewish settler population had grown by one third since the beginning of the Oslo process and there was no doubt that Israel had no intention of slowing down its settlement activities. Palestinians, however, continued talks with Israel and signed the Wye River Memorandum for the implementation of the Oslo II Agreement and the resumption of final status talks on October 23, 1998.<sup>50</sup> Further implementation was then suspended due to the Knesset vote of December calling for early elections. In May 1999, the Labor Party was elected back to power with Ehud Barak, as new Prime Minister. He ran on a platform of four red lines – or "Four Nos" regarding any future final status agreement.<sup>51</sup> On September 4, 1999 in Sharm Al-Sheikh, Barak re-negotiated the Wye River Agreement, including its redeployment percentages and withdrawal schedule, leading to the signing of the Agreement for the implementation of the Wye River Memorandum, also known as Sharm Al-Sheikh Agreement, further postponing the "transitional phase".<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Foreign Minister Peres to Foreign Minister Holst on Jerusalem (October 11 1994), available at: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook9/Pages/117%20Letter%20from%20Foreign%20Minister%20Peres%20to%20Foreign.aspx>.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., issuance of Palestinian passports and stamps; unveiling of plans for an international airport; broadcasting a TV station; appointment of a new Mufti of Jerusalem.

<sup>50</sup> The memorandum mainly divided the 2<sup>nd</sup> redeployment provided by Oslo II, which had to be completed in April 1997, into three phases totaling 13% of the West Bank, and provided, *inter alia*, for the opening of the Gaza airport and the safe passage corridor as well as for the release of prisoners.

<sup>51</sup> I.e., (1) No to the return to the 1967 borders, as required by the UN Resolution 242; (2) No to the return of Palestinian refugees, as required by UN Resolution 194; (3) No to any withdrawal from East Jerusalem and to accepting any Palestinian sovereignty over it, as required by UN Resolutions 194 and 242; (4) No to dismantling or 'freezing' the Jewish settlements in the OPT, as demanded by UN Resolution 465.

<sup>52</sup> The Sharm Al-Sheikh Agreement stipulated that Israel would withdraw in three stages from another 11% of West Bank land, release some 350 Palestinian political prisoners, open the safe passages, and begin permanent status talks on 13 September 1999 to reach a framework for a settlement of the conflict by February 2000 and a final peace agreement by September 2000.



## 8. Camp David II & The Second Intifada (2000-2004)

After endless rounds of negotiations and four consecutive Israeli governments since the signing of the Oslo Accords, the unreadiness of Israeli society and polity to reach a political settlement had become obvious, and Palestinian frustration with Israel's refusal to implement the interim agreements - whether regarding redeployment of Israeli forces, opening a safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, ceasing settlement construction, or releasing Palestinian prisoners - had brought public support for such a process to a historical low and popular anger and disillusionment to a new height.

During Prime Minister Barak tenure, the similarity of the Labor Party's agenda vis-à-vis the "peace process" to the right-wing Likud Party's agenda became clearer than ever. Palestinians realized that Israel had never intended to implement any of the agreements signed, instead planning to keep the Palestinian leadership "busy" with all kinds of negotiations in order to keep up the appearance of an ongoing process, while pressing forward with a program which is widely perceived as continued colonization of the OPT among Palestinians.<sup>53</sup>



In an attempt to break the deadlock, and in the hopes of leaving a legacy, President Clinton invited Palestinian and Israeli leaders to a summit at Camp David (11-25 July 2000) to conclude a final framework agreement, which would theoretically fulfill Arafat's lifetime goal of establishing a sovereign state and saving the Barak government amidst a divided society and Knesset.<sup>54</sup>

At Camp David the following proposed US 'principles' were discussed: the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state; postponement of a declaration of the 'end of the conflict'; Israeli withdrawal from 95% of the West Bank and annexation of the remainder in an exchange for Israeli territory of equal size and value; safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza; and free passage from Bethlehem to Ramallah. On Jerusalem, the proposal entailed Palestinian civilian autonomy around the Old City (with holy places under independent religious administration) and a passage to the Haram Ash-Sharif area; increased civil autonomy for Palestinian neighborhoods; and the annexation of the Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev settlements (lying to the East of occupied East Jerusalem and therefore well into the OPT) to the Israeli Jerusalem municipality. On refugees, the proposal entailed Israel's recognition of refugee "suffering"; limited return for some refugees to Israel within the framework of family unification and phased assimilation into the Palestinian state for others; and refugee compensation and rehabilitation through an international body.

With the famous words, "the Arab Leader who would surrender Jerusalem is not born yet," Arafat demanded sovereignty over East Jerusalem and told Clinton he saw no point in continuing the talks due to Barak's take-it-or-leave-it position regarding the US proposal on Jerusalem. On July 25, Clinton declared an end to the summit, laying the majority of the blame at Arafat's door. Although the summit produced no tangible results, it did expose all issues and positions, effectively putting an end to hidden agendas and former taboos.

Back home, the already tense situation boiled over on 28 September 2000, when Likud leader Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque surrounded by thousands of security forces deployed in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. Ensuing clashes with Palestinian protestors soon sparked a widespread - this time more violent - uprising in the OPT as well as unrest within Israel and in the Arab world. The Al-Aqsa Intifada, as

<sup>53</sup> Against this background, the PLO Central Council voted unanimously in Gaza on 2-3 July 2000 to declare a Palestinian state after the transitional period would end on 13 September 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Israeli officials had been busy to assure Arafat of the sincerity of the Israeli government's efforts to achieve a permanent agreement; on March 3, 2000, Knesset speaker Avraham Burg reiterated Barak's commitment, and right before the Camp David Summit, Cabinet Minister Yossi Sarid assured Arafat of Barak's sincerity.

it was quickly termed, brought the talks to a halt, sidelined President Arafat, saw PA areas re-occupied, caused unprecedented damage<sup>55</sup> to the Palestinian economy and infrastructure, and accelerated the construction of the separation barrier.<sup>56</sup>

Local and external efforts to end the hostilities and return to the negotiating table remained unsuccessful<sup>57</sup>, most notably the “Taba Talks” (21-27 January 2001), whereby attempts were made to build on Camp David and to reach an understanding prior to the Israeli elections the following month. Hopes further faded with two more blows: the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister and the death of one of the most reputable and steadfast Palestinian leaders, Faisal Husseini.<sup>58</sup>

In March 2002, Israel launched its so-called “Operation Defensive Shield” one of the most severe demonstrations of Israel’s military might up to that point, with numerous incursions, leading to the death of over 1,000 Palestinians, an unprecedented level of destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure<sup>59</sup>, the reoccupation of most of the West Bank, and the isolation of Chairman Arafat in his presidential compound (*Al-Muqata’a*) in Ramallah.

On the political level, small glimmers of hope came in the form of the Saudi peace initiative (March), President Bush’s speech endorsing a Palestinian state (June), and the Quartet’s ‘Road Map’ (December), although none of which materialized into a solution. The PA’s continued its reform efforts and created the post of a Prime Minister. On April 30, 2003, the first office-holder, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), swore in a new cabinet. On June 4, Prime Minister Abbas attended a summit with President Bush, Prime Minister Sharon, and King Abdullah in Aqaba, ending with a pledge to end terrorism, and promises by Sharon to dismantle settlement outposts and remain committed to a two-state solution.

However, new protests erupted in the OPT in mid-September 2003, after Sharon made an internationally condemned decision to “remove” Arafat and establish an army post opposite the Muqata’a. Sharon’s policies were also criticized by former Shin Bet chiefs, who warned that Israel would face disaster if no agreement with the Palestinians was reached.<sup>60</sup>

While Israel continued building settlements and the separation barrier, a new Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative, led by Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo and sponsored by Switzerland, tried to formulate a permanent status agreement (which became known as ‘Geneva Initiative’ or ‘Accord’, signed in Aqaba on 12 October 2003). However, the initiative was seen by many as a mere tool to prepare public opinion for compromises.

The year 2004 was dominated by the loss of Palestinian leaders: the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and his successor, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, were assassinated by Israeli forces in Gaza (on March 22 and April 17 respectively), popular Fatah leader Marwan Barghouthi was sentenced to life plus 40 years in prison (June 6), and an era came to an end with the death of Chairman Yasser Arafat<sup>61</sup> (November 11) - the face, symbol, father and charismatic leader of the Palestinian national movement for over 40 years - whose funeral at the Muqata’a was attended by hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

During this period, one notable success was achieved on 9 July 2004, when the International Court of Justice found that Israel’s construction of the separation barrier violates international law, primarily as it involves the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian land and property and severe movement restrictions for Palestinian people. Accordingly the Court concluded that Israel has a legal obligation to cease its construction of the wall, as well as dismantling it, returning seized property and compensating Palestinian landowners.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>55</sup> In 2001 alone, over 570 Palestinians were killed and more than 6,000 injured; over 8,500 dunums of land were bulldozed, over 22,000 trees uprooted and 252 houses demolished.

<sup>56</sup> The idea of a separation barrier actually began much earlier than 2002/3. In 1995, Rabin established the Shahal Commission to discuss how to implement such a barrier (albeit one which would separate Palestinians and Israelis, not one mostly separating Palestinians from Palestinians.)

<sup>57</sup> Including President Clinton’s “Parameters” (December 2000), attempts by CIA director George Tenet (June 2001), US General Zinni working with Israeli-Egyptian-Palestinian officials (2002), and Ariel Sharon’s plan for a long-term interim agreement and a Palestinian state in some 42% of the West Bank.

<sup>58</sup> Who had suffered a heart attack on May 31, 2001, whilst in Kuwait, and was buried next to his father, Abdel Qader Husseini, on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

<sup>59</sup> Including the Gaza airport and large parts of Jenin refugee camp.

<sup>60</sup> Published in an article in *Yedioth Aharonot* on November 14, 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Who died, aged 75, of an unknown cause at Percy Military Hospital in Clamart near Paris, where he had been evacuated to, after a month-long deteriorating illness.

<sup>62</sup> International Court of Justice Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004. Available from: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1677.pdf>. On 20 July 2004 the ICJ’s Advisory Opinion was confirmed by UNGA Resolution ES-10/15.

## 9. Disengagement to Resumption of Direct Negotiations (2005-2010)

Two months after the death of Arafat, on January 9, 2005, Palestinians elected Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as president of the PA<sup>63</sup>. Abbas' political agenda drew on Arafat's mission - negotiations towards a two-state solution - while trying to legitimize his presidency with a focus on (1) the rule of law and order, (2) security sector reform, (3) the holding of municipal elections, and (4) the reestablishment of Arab, Western and Russian support (for which he embarked on lengthy trips, visiting Moscow and Washington as well as numerous Asian and Arab countries).

On February 16, 2005, the Knesset passed the Disengagement Implementation Law to evacuate all 8000 settlers living in Gaza and four small settlements in the northern West Bank with a stated goal of creating "maximum security with minimum friction" between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>64</sup> While the plan was implemented during August and September 2005, Israel retained control of all land borders, air space, and sea access to Gaza, while continuing to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Towards the end of 2005, the dominating issue was the elections for the second Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), scheduled for January 2006. Twelve lists of candidates ran, including some "first timers" ( Hamas' 'Change and Reform' list; 'The Third Way' led by Finance Minister Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi; and 'Al-Mustaqbal' headed by jailed Marwan Barghouti representing Fatah's young generation, which, however, was later withdrawn to avoid a split within Fatah).

The victory of the Hamas 'Change and Reform' list in the PLC election was a 'political earthquake' in Palestinian politics and a major setback for Fatah. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was sworn in as Prime Minister by President Abbas and gave his assurance that a Hamas government was prepared to give negotiations a chance, stating that the problem was not the Palestinian side, but Israel's disregard of commitments already made. In February 2006, Hamas offered Israel a 10-year truce in return for Israel's withdrawal from the OPT and recognition of Palestinian rights, including the right of return. However, in March, the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia) severed all direct aid to the newly formed Hamas-led cabinet, insisting that Hamas recognize Israel, renounce terror and accept all previous agreements.<sup>65</sup>

Major changes also occurred on the Israeli political scene: After a massive stroke had incapacitated Prime Minister Sharon, Knesset elections were held in March 2006, with Sharon's Kadima party winning a majority and his deputy Ehud Olmert becoming the new Prime Minister. Olmert vowed to "move to set the final borders of the state of Israel", preferably in an agreement with the Palestinians, but if the latter proved unable to "change their ethos and to accept compromises", Israel would "take control of its own fate."<sup>66</sup>



<sup>63</sup> Mahmoud Abbas, a political pragmatist from the PLO old guards, was elected with 62.5% of the vote.

<sup>64</sup> The plan had been first proposed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Herzliya Conference on Security on 18 December 2003.

<sup>65</sup> This decision, on the part of the international community, to boycott the Hamas-led Cabinet as opposed to engaging with it, has since been acknowledged to have been a mistaken strategy.

<sup>66</sup> Butcher, Tim, "Victory puts Olmert at centre of Israeli politics", The Telegraph (March 29, 2006), available online: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/1514281/Victory-puts-Olmert-at-centre-of-Israeli-politics.html>.

In Gaza, tensions between Fatah and Hamas militants rose as Fatah commanders refused to take orders from the new government. Escalations in June 2007 led to Hamas' seizure of the headquarters of Fatah and the Preventive Security offices in Gaza; Abbas declared a state of emergency, dismissed the 'unity government' and appointed Salam Fayyad as new Prime Minister for a new PA emergency government, while Israel declared Gaza an "enemy entity".

In a bid to strengthen the PA, the international community granted it millions of dollars in aid and encouraged the resumption of talks. On August 28, 2007, President Abbas met Prime Minister Olmert in Jerusalem and both later agreed to attend an international conference, organized by President George Bush, which aimed at setting a timetable for future negotiations on final status issues. The Annapolis Conference was held on November 27, 2007, and was attended by representatives from over 30 nations. The meeting ended with a "joint understanding" presented by the US, whereby both parties agreed to launch direct negotiations and reach an agreement by the end of 2008. Although talks were held, the Israeli government continued its project of colonization throughout the OPT, including the renewal of closure orders for Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, continued construction of settlements and the wall and severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods. During separate meetings with Olmert in Jerusalem and Abbas in Ramallah in early 2008, President Bush expressed his frustration with these ongoing policies saying: "Swiss cheese is not going to work when it comes to the outline of a state and I mean it."<sup>67</sup>

While Prime Minister Fayyad introduced his 'Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010', based on firm control by the PA security and a market-based economic agenda, Khaled Masha'al, head of Hamas' Political Bureau, fearing further isolation, offered Israel a conditional truce, saying, "We agree to a Palestinian state on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, with genuine sovereignty, without settlements but without recognizing Israel."<sup>68</sup>

The Middle East Quartet hosted a follow-up meeting to the Annapolis Conference in Sharm Al-Sheikh on 9 November 2008, but it delivered nothing but yet another statement confirming the need for continuous negotiations to reach a comprehensive agreement.

On December 27, 2008, Israel launched a major offensive on the Gaza Strip (named 'Operation Cast Lead' by the Israeli side) killing some 1,400 Palestinians, the majority civilians. There were 13 fatalities on the Israeli side, three of whom were civilians. The offensive ended on January 18, 2009, with unilateral ceasefires declared by Israel and armed Palestinian groups. It had, however, put an end to peace talks.

Hamas and Fatah started a new round of reconciliation talks in Cairo in late February 2009. On March 7, Salam Fayyad submitted his resignation as Prime Minister to pave the way for the formation of a national unity government. However, internal divisions within each party were growing. In August 2009, the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah convention in Bethlehem (the first to be held in 20 years) exposed four different trends within the movement,<sup>69</sup> although President Abbas succeeded in bringing them all together behind his agenda. Hamas also had to cope with divisions. Khaled Masha'al and Musa Abu Marzouk expressed support for the Fatah Convention, while Hamas leaders in Gaza refused to allow Fatah members to travel to Bethlehem to participate – despite interventions from Cairo, Damascus, Amman and Doha.

At the same time, Fayyad's second plan - 'Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State'<sup>70</sup> - which focused on building institutions and physical infrastructure for a robust economic base in the West Bank and a secure environment, was endorsed by the Quartet and supported by international donors.<sup>71</sup> The US Security Coordinator for Israel and PA, General Keith Dayton, was appointed to build up Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, and security cooperation between Israel and the PA reached unprecedented levels.

<sup>67</sup> Public papers of the Presidents of the United States. George W. Bush, 2008-2009, p. 62.

<sup>68</sup> "Hamas offers conditional truce to Israel", CBS News (April 28, 2008), available online: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hamas-offers-conditional-truce-to-israel/>.

<sup>69</sup> One headed by President Abbas and his men, who – aware that the current situation allowed for Palestinian autonomy at best - clung to the two-state solution and negotiated Palestinian statehood. The second trend was represented by jailed Marwan Barghout, and asked for 14 conditions for Israel to meet before any negotiations. The third was led by former head of the Preventive Security Forces in Gaza, Mohammed Dahlan, calling for confronting Hamas after its *coup d'état* in Gaza with all means available. The fourth trend combined Ahmad Qrei'a and Fatah's old guard who were defeated at the convention's election and in a "nostalgic limbo" praising the old days of Arafat.

<sup>70</sup> Fayyad was reappointed as Prime Minister in a new government on 19 May 2009. The document is available at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/fayyad\\_plan\\_section.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/fayyad_plan_section.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Simanovsky, Natalia, "The Fayyad Plan: Implication for the State of Israel", *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 12, 2011.

However, Fayyad also faced struggles in terms of a financial crisis<sup>72</sup>, a growing rift with President Abbas, opposition from Fatah, and criticism from Hamas for siding with ‘Dayton’s forces’ in the arrests and torture of Hamas activists.<sup>73</sup>

On March 3, 2010, Arab League Foreign Ministers supported the idea of proximity talks<sup>74</sup> (i.e., shuttle diplomacy on the part of US Middle East envoy George Mitchell, rather than face to face talks<sup>75</sup>), which, as widely expected, failed to re-launch negotiations as the differences between the two sides were too big. Nevertheless, direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations did resume in September 2010, after a framework was laid down during meetings attended by President Obama, President Abbas, President Mubarak, King Abdullah of Jordan and Prime Minister Netanyahu in Sharm Al-Sheikh. However, these talks also failed on September 26, 2010, when Israel ended a partial and temporary freeze on settlement construction and resumed settlement activities throughout the West Bank.<sup>76</sup>

Hamas and Fatah started a new round of reconciliation talks in Cairo in late February 2009. On March 7, Salam Fayyad submitted his resignation as Prime Minister to pave the way for the formation of a national unity government. However, internal divisions within each party were growing. In August 2009, the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah convention in Bethlehem (the first to be held in 20 years) exposed four different trends within the movement,<sup>77</sup> although President Abbas succeeding in bringing them all together behind his agenda. Hamas also had to cope with divisions. Khaled Masha’al and Musa Abu Marzouk expressed support for the Fatah Convention, while Hamas leaders in Gaza refused to allow Fatah members to travel to Bethlehem to participate – despite interventions from Cairo, Damascus, Amman and Doha.

At the same time, Fayyad’s second plan - ‘Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State’<sup>78</sup> - which focused on building institutions and physical infrastructure for a robust economic base in the West Bank and a secure environment, was endorsed by the Quartet and supported by international donors.<sup>79</sup> The US Security Coordinator for Israel and PA, General Keith Dayton, was appointed to build up Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, and security cooperation between Israel and the PA reached unprecedented levels.

However, Fayyad also faced struggles in terms of a financial crisis<sup>80</sup>, a growing rift with President Abbas, opposition from Fatah, and criticism from Hamas for siding with ‘Dayton’s forces’ in the arrests and torture of Hamas activists.<sup>81</sup>

On March 3, 2010, Arab League Foreign Ministers supported the idea of proximity talks<sup>82</sup> (i.e., shuttle diplomacy on the part of US Middle East envoy George Mitchell, rather than face to face talks<sup>83</sup>), which, as widely expected, failed to re-launch negotiations as the differences between the two sides were too big. Nevertheless, direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations did resume in September 2010, after a framework was laid down during meetings attended by President Obama, President Abbas, President Mubarak, King Abdullah of Jordan and Prime Minister Netanyahu in Sharm Al-Sheikh. However, these talks also failed on September 26, 2010, when Israel ended a partial and temporary freeze on settlement construction and resumed settlement activities throughout the West Bank.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Due to cuts in US aid, Israel’s withholding of revenues, and the Arab states’ failure to deliver the promised funds.

<sup>73</sup> “Politics”, *Al-Jazeera English Network*, 13 June 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Saleh, Yasmine, “Arab League gives Mideast talks 4-month window”, Reuters, 3 March 2010. Available online: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-idUSLDE6221BV20100303>.

<sup>75</sup> Mitchell started his first round of proximity talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials on May 9, 2010, passing messages and introducing ideas for the transitional phase (e.g., land swaps, stationing NATO forces, Hamas-Fatah conciliation and security reform; settlement freeze).

<sup>76</sup> PASSIA Bulletin, *Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations & the Issues at Stake*. June 2011. p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> One headed by President Abbas and his men, who – aware that the current situation allowed for Palestinian autonomy at best - clung to the two-state solution and negotiated Palestinian statehood. The second trend was represented by jailed Marwan Barghouti, and asked for 14 conditions for Israel to meet before any negotiations. The third was led by former head of the Preventive Security Forces in Gaza, Mohammed Dahlan, calling for confronting Hamas after its *coup d’état* in Gaza with all means available. The fourth trend combined Ahmad Qrei’a and Fatah’s old guard who were defeated at the convention’s election and in a “nostalgic limbo” praising the old days of Arafat.

<sup>78</sup> Fayyad was reappointed as Prime Minister in a new government on 19 May 2009. The document is available at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/fayyad\\_plan\\_section.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/fayyad_plan_section.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Simanovsky, Natalia, “The Fayyad Plan: Implication for the State of Israel”, *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 12, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Due to cuts in US aid, Israel’s withholding of revenues, and the Arab states’ failure to deliver the promised funds.

<sup>81</sup> “Politics”, *Al-Jazeera English Network*, 13 June 2011.

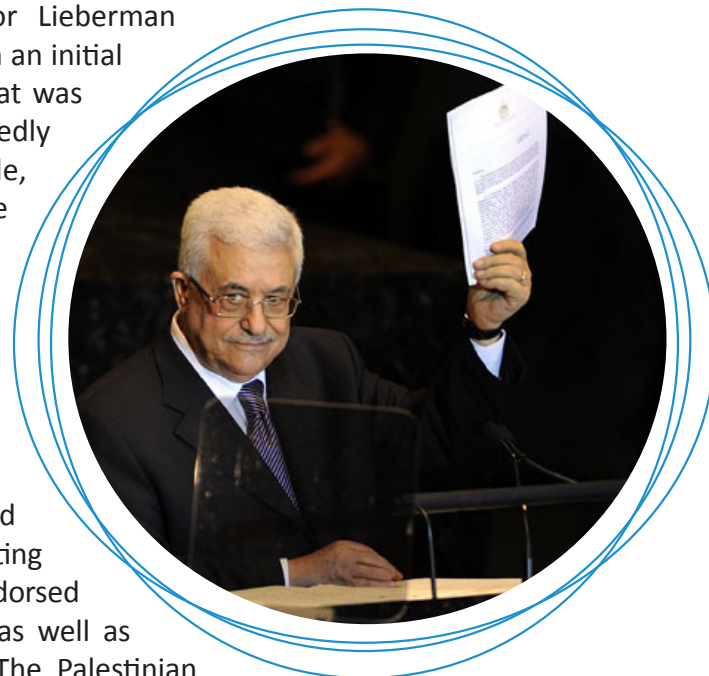
<sup>82</sup> Saleh, Yasmine, “Arab League gives Mideast talks 4-month window”, Reuters, 3 March 2010. Available online: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-idUSLDE6221BV20100303>.

<sup>83</sup> Mitchell started his first round of proximity talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials on May 9, 2010, passing messages and introducing ideas for the transitional phase (e.g., land swaps, stationing NATO forces, Hamas-Fatah conciliation and security reform; settlement freeze).

<sup>84</sup> PASSIA Bulletin, *Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations & the Issues at Stake*. June 2011. p. 3.

## 10. The UN Bid & Other Tracks (2011-2017)

In January 2011, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman proposed the establishment of a Palestinian state on an initial 50% of the West Bank (i.e., 50% of the 22% of what was Palestine before 1948), with final borders supposedly to be negotiated at a later date. The Palestinian side, fearing that the Israeli side would attempt to make this 50% the final borders, rejected the proposal. After meetings in Tel Aviv and Ramallah in March, Quartet representatives expressed little hope for the resumption of negotiations in the near future, stating the differences between the two sides as far too wide.<sup>85</sup>



Amidst this stalemate, President Abbas announced a new strategy of 'internationalization', requesting recognition of a Palestinian state on internationally endorsed terms of reference (primarily UN Resolution 242), as well as admitting Palestine as a full member of the UN. The Palestinian leadership launched a massive diplomatic campaign to garner support for its initiative and change the *status quo* by internationalizing the conflict.

President Abbas submitted a request for recognition of Palestine as a full member state to the UN in September 2011 and received a hero's welcome by Palestinians upon his return to Ramallah. The request failed to obtain a unanimous recommendation by the UNSC Committee on the Admission of New Members (due to the anticipated US veto), but a watered-down process requesting the UNGA to upgrade Palestine's UN status from observer 'en non-member) observer 'state' was overwhelmingly supported by a vote of 138:9 (with 41 abstentions) on 29 November 2012.<sup>86</sup> While mainly symbolic, the upgraded status opened new avenues for Palestinians to pursue legal claims against Israel for its violations of international law in venues such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In the following months and years, and against a backdrop of continued Israeli colonization, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and internal divisions, Palestinians developed, furthered and explored various avenues. Some were internal, others external, some official, others not- but all challenged the political leadership in terms of how to proceed and, at times, exposed their reluctance, weakness and lack of political will. These tracks included: further efforts towards state building, negotiations, UN recognition, bilateral recognitions, internal reconciliation and elections, calling for a freeze of security coordination with Israel, and non-violent resistance in the form of demonstrations, creative campaigns and the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, as tools to pressure Israel into complying with international law.

In July 2013, US Secretary of State Kerry revived negotiations with the goal of reaching a final status agreement within nine months, while simultaneously promoting investment in and development of the Palestinian economy. However, the talks had already begun on shaky grounds since there was no

<sup>85</sup> Haaretz, 17 March 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Two weeks earlier, Israeli had launched another offensive (Operation 'Pillar of Cloud or Defence') on Gaza, which was widely seen as a show of force by Netanyahu, seeking reelection and support against the upcoming UNGA vote.

consensus on the basis of such talks and the suspension of settlement building. Nine months later, all parties were forced to admit defeat. For the first time, however, the US placed the blame publicly at Israel's door, citing continued settlement construction as the "primary sabotage".<sup>87</sup> Israel had announced almost 14,000 new settlement units during the nine month period.<sup>88</sup>

Together with Israel's continued colonization of Palestine, a combination of factors contributed to the ultimate demise of this round of talks, including: a demand by Israel for Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish State (as opposed to recognizing Israel as a state, which the PLO did back in 1993); Israel's delay of a previously agreed-upon release of 26 Palestinian prisoners; and the formation of a Palestinian national consensus government with which Israel refused to negotiate.

With the negotiations over, President Abbas signed letters preparing for the PA/PLO's accession to 15 international treaties. In response, Prime Minister Netanyahu approved of hundreds of new settlement units and economic sanctions against the PA.

Palestinian efforts to advance statehood were further overshadowed by yet another war on Gaza, and the most devastating to date (July/August 2014)<sup>89</sup> as well as the settler movement's rise to power in Israel, and the UNSC's failure to vote for ending the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent state of Palestine within three years (December 31, 2014).

However, on September 11, 2015, the UNGA voted with an overwhelming majority of 119 to 8 for raising the Palestinian flag at the UN and on September 30, President Abbas raised it for the first time at the UN building in New York. While only symbolic, it yet gave the Palestinians "some hope that the international community has not abandoned them and supports their legitimate rights of statehood and independence".<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, frustration and hopelessness, particularly among young Palestinians, and growing tensions over Al-Aqsa Mosque erupted as a new cycle of violence in October 2015. Although termed the "knife *intifada*" by some, knife attacks were overwhelmingly perpetrated by individuals without leaders and detached from the armed factions.

In an attempt to defuse this "powder keg", French President François Hollande called for a new international peace conference followed by direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in April 2016.

Meanwhile, another initiative was launched by US Secretary of State John Kerry who gathered King Abdullah, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Netanyahu at a secret summit<sup>91</sup> at Aqaba, Jordan, in February 2016 to promote a "Regional Peace", including recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and renewal of talks with the Palestinians with the support of the Arab countries. The plan was supported by Jordan and Egypt but rejected by Netanyahu.

In December 2016, the UN Security Council voted in favor of Resolution 2334, condemning Israeli settlement activity and passing by a margin of 14-0, with the US Administration making a significant political statement by withholding its veto, in the closing days of Barack Obama's presidency.

<sup>87</sup> *Ynet News*, 2 May 2014. Available from: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4515821,00.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Peace Now, "9 Months of Talks, 9 Months of Settlement Development", April 2014. Available from: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/9-months-of-talks-9-months-of-settlement-development>.

<sup>89</sup> Israel's so-called "Operation Protective Edge" - the bombardment of, and invasion into, Gaza - which left over 2,100 Palestinians dead, more than 11,100 wounded, and some 520,000 displaced, ended with an Egyptian brokered a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

<sup>90</sup> Riyadh Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine to UN in New York, September 30, 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Details of the secret summit were only revealed in the press in February 2017.

# 50 Years of Palestinian Political History



After the election of President Donald Trump, Kerry's idea was re-introduced in separate meetings with Netanyahu, King Abdullah and Presidents Al-Sisi in Washington in March and April 2017. The outcome of such meetings, along with the nature of the US's involvement in the Palestine/Israel conflict under President Trump, remains to be seen.



**Palestinian Academic Society  
for the Study of International Affairs**

Tel: +972-2-626-4426 / 628-6566 | Fax: +972-2-628 2819

Email: [passia@passia.org](mailto:passia@passia.org) | Hind Al-Husseini, Alley, 2 Wadi Al-Joz | P.O. Box 19545, Jerusalem / Al-Quds



**Kindly supported by the  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung  
(FES), Jerusalem**