

Table 1

Key Events in the Middle East Peace Process since September 11

- **September 11, 2001**—Terrorist attacks in the United States destroy the World Trade Center complex and part of the Pentagon, sparking the U.S.-led “war on terrorism.”
- **December 3, 2001**—In response to a series of Palestinian suicide bombings, the Israeli cabinet declares that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is an “entity that supports terrorism, and must be dealt with accordingly.”¹ The Israeli army attacks PNA targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and confines Yasser Arafat to his headquarters.
- **March 27–28, 2002**—The Arab League endorses a peace initiative proposed by Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Abdullah. The plan calls for Israel’s full withdrawal from the occupied territories in exchange for full normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel.
- **April 29, 2003**—Palestinian legislators confirm their first prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, as part of a political reform program.
- **April 30, 2003**—The “Quartet” (United States, Russia, EU, and UN) formally introduces the “road map” peace plan.
- **September 6, 2003**—Mahmoud Abbas resigns from his post as prime minister after a cease-fire between Israel and armed Palestinian groups fails. He is replaced by Ahmed Qurei.
- **June 30, 2004**—The Israeli High Court of Justice upholds the government’s right to construct a “separation fence” in Palestinian territory, but orders the route of the fence to be changed.² Israel later revises the route to comply with the ruling.
- **July 9, 2004**—The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issues a nonbinding advisory opinion stating that Israel’s “construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” is “contrary to international law.”³
- **July 20, 2004**—The UN General Assembly votes overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution calling on Israel to abide by the ICJ’s advisory opinion and “halt construction of its security barrier in the West Bank.”⁴ Israel continues construction of the barrier.
- **November 11, 2004**—Yasser Arafat dies at the age of seventy-five after falling into a coma.
- **January 9, 2005**—Mahmoud Abbas is elected as the new president of the PNA.
- **August 17-23, 2005**—Despite settler protests, Israel evacuates all of its settlements in the Gaza Strip and four smaller settlements in the West Bank. The move is supported by a majority of the Israeli public.
- **November 21, 2005**—Ariel Sharon announces his departure from the Likud party and the formation of a new centrist party, which he names Kadima.
- **January 4, 2006**—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffers an incapacitating stroke. Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert takes over as prime minister.
- **January 25, 2006**— Hamas, which the United States labels as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, wins Palestinian parliamentary elections. Hamas does not recognize Israel’s right to exist and rejects the Oslo Accords.
- **February 19, 2006**—The Israeli cabinet freezes monthly tax and customs payments to the PNA one day after Hamas takes control of the Palestinian Parliament. The frozen money accounts for about half of the Palestinian government’s payroll.
- **April 7, 2006**—In an effort to pressure the Hamas-led Palestinian government to recognize Israel and renounce violence, the United States and EU formally suspend aid to the PNA.
- **June 26, 2006**—Palestinian militants from Gaza kill two Israeli soldiers, wound three, and kidnap another in an attack on an Israeli army outpost. The military wing of Hamas takes partial responsibility for the raid, sparking a five-month-long Israeli military offensive into Gaza.
- **July 12, 2006**—An attack by Lebanese extremist group Hezbollah in Israel results in the death of eight Israeli soldiers, with two captured. The assault prompts Israel to initiate a massive bombing campaign in Lebanon, block Lebanese ports, and send military forces into southern Lebanon for the first time in six years.
- **August 14, 2006**—A United Nations–negotiated cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah goes into effect.

- **November 26, 2006**—Israel withdraws its troops from the Gaza Strip under a truce between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.
- **December 24, 2006**—Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas hold their first formal meeting in an effort to revive the peace process.
- **February 6–8, 2007**—Saudi Arabia hosts a meeting between leaders of Hamas and Fatah in an effort to halt growing factional violence in the Gaza Strip. Hamas agrees to form a unity coalition with the more moderate Fatah, with hopes of ending the West’s suspension of aid to the Palestinian government. However, the guiding document for the coalition does not meet the international community’s demand that Hamas recognize Israel. Israel declares it will not deal with the new government.
- **April 30, 2007**—The Winograd Committee, an official Israeli investigative commission, accuses Prime Minister Olmert of “a serious failure in exercising judgment, responsibility and prudence” in the management of the war with Lebanon in the summer of 2006.⁵ The report spurs calls for Olmert’s resignation, but he remains in office.
- **June 2007**—The Hamas-Fatah unity government is unable to halt factional violence between their armed wings. The unity government collapses and Hamas takes control of the Gaza Strip.

¹ Cabinet Secretariat, “Special Cabinet Meeting—Palestinian Authority is an Entity That Supports Terrorism—Tanzim and Force 17 are Terrorist Organizations—And Will Be Acted Against Accordingly,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 3, 2001, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2001/Special+Cabinet+meeting-+Palestinian+Authority+is.htm> (accessed June 14, 2007).

² Aharon Barak, “Judgment: Beit Sourik Village Council v. The Government of Israel,” H CJ 2056/04, http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/75671100-3248-4196-888B-362D6425D3AA/0/H CJ_Fence_ruling_300604.doc (accessed June 13, 2007).

³ International Court of Justice, “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” Press Release 2004/38, July 9, 2004, <http://www.icj-cij.org/presscom/index.php?pr=71&pt=1&p1=6&p2=1> (accessed June 13, 2007).

⁴ United Nations, “General Assembly Emergency Session Overwhelmingly Demands Israel’s Compliance,” Press Release GA/10248, July 20, 2004, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/ga10248.doc.htm> (accessed June 13, 2007).

⁵ Israel Government Press Office, “Winograd Commission Submits Interim Report,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 30, 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2007/Winograd+Inquiry+Commission+submits+Interim+Report+30-Apr-2007.htm> (accessed June 14, 2007).