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16 November 1998-15 February 1999

This section is part sixty-one of a chronology begun in JPS 23, no. 3 (Spring 1984). Chronology dates reflect Eastern Standard Time. For more detail on events related to the peace process, see the Peace Monitor in this issue.

16 November

As the Knesset begins debate on ratification of the 10/23 Wye River Memorandum, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu suspends the agmt.'s implementation, saying he will not carry out the 1st of 3 stages of further redeployment (FRD) required by Wye until PA head Yasser Arafat retracts his 11/15 threat to stage an uprising against Israel if Palestinian access to Jerusalem is blocked. (MM 11/16; CSM, NYT, WP, WT 11/17; WJW 11/19)

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross meets with Arafat in Jericho. (ITV 11/16 in WNC 11/18; WT 11/17)

In Gaza, Israel, Jordan, the U.S. meet to discuss the Iribid industrial zone project. (Petra-JNA 11/17; JT 11/23 in WNC 11/24; Petra-JNA 11/23 in WNC 11/30) (see Peace Monitor)

In Cairo, Russia, Egypt hold high-level experts mtg. on defense cooperation. Russian DM hopes deepening military ties "will become an important factor of peace and stability in the Middle East." (Interfax, ITAR-TASS, MENA 11/16 in WNC 11/17; MENA 11/17 in WNC 11/18)


Palestinians in al-Khader protest confiscation of land for bypass road. (CSM 11/17)


17 NOVEMBER

Knesset ratifies the Wye agmt. Israeli cabinet postpones mtg. on approval of 1st stage of FRD to 11/19, pending PA moves to collect illegal weapons, clamp down on incitement. To appease Netanyahu (see 11/16), Arafat reiterates PA adherence to the peace process. Israeli officials meet with settlers to go over FRD maps. (MM 11/17; MA 11/17 in WNC 11/18; ITV 11/17 in WNC 11/19; MM, NYT, WP, WT 11/18; WJW 11/19; PR 11/20; MEI 11/27)

UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq. (CSM 11/18) (see 11/15)

With government permission, Jordanian women's groups, opposition parties stage small rally outside the Iraqi emb. in Amman to express solidarity with Baghdad in the face of U.S. threats of attack. Jordan's Interior Min. says it would ban pro-Iraq demonstrations if the U.S. actually strikes. (JT 11/18 in WNC 11/19) (see 11/15)

18 NOVEMBER

Israeli FM Sharon, PA chief negotiator Mahmoud Abbas meet at the Israeli FM's in Jerusalem to discuss final status talks, progress of the PA-Israeli comms. on the economy, Gaza port, FRDs. (MM, NYT, WP, WT 11/19; ITV 11/20 in WNC 11/23)

Israel, the PA finalize procedures for Gaza airport. (ITV 11/19 in WNC 11/20; MM 11/24)

The PA runs text of the 5/98 Palestinian Weapons Control Law in Palestinian local newspapers. (MEI, PR 11/27)

In Amman, Palestinian Council (PC) Speaker Ahmad Qurai' meets with Crown Prince Hassan to discuss final status negotiations. (Petra-JNA 11/18 in WNC 11/19, 11/20)

Russia says that it is prepared to sell Syria hundreds of millions of dollars worth of military hardware; expects bilateral arms trade to be worth $5 b. over the next 5 yrs. (Interfax, ITAR-TASS 11/18 in WNC 11/19; al-Quds al-Arabi 12/2 in WNC 12/7; ITV 12/24 in WNC 12/28)

Israeli FM Netanyahu admits that 2 Israelis arrested in Cyprus 11/7 are Mossad agents but says that Israel was not spying on Cyprus or on Turkey's behalf. (ITV 11/18 in WNC 11/20)
IDF evicts settlers fr. hilltop nr. Kedumim, but takes no action against settlers who set up 6 mobile homes on hill nr. Halamish. (WT 11/19) (see 11/17)

19 NOVEMBER

House of Representatives opens hearings on impeachment of Pres. Bill Clinton. (NYT, WP 11/20)


U.S. agrees to give Israel $1.2 b. to cover cost of FRD pending approval of Congress. The PA is also hoping for a $400 m. U.S. economic aid package. (YA 11/19 in WNC 11/20; HA [Internet] 11/20; WP 11/24)

PA rejects Israel's list, presented today, of 250 Palestinians to be freed in the 1st of 3 Israeli prisoner releases agreed to at Wye; says inclusion of 150 common criminals and only 100 political prisoners is a violation of the spirit of Wye. U.S. urges the parties to work the problem out bwn. themselves. (QY 11/19 in WNC 11/20; NYT, WP 11/20; WP 11/22; CSM, WT 11/23)

PA broadcasts a decree against anti-Israeli incitement. (MM 11/19; NYT, WP 11/20; LAW 11/24; MEI 11/27)

Israel tells the Christian community that a second entrance in the wall of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in East Jerusalem must be made to accommodate the many pilgrims expected to come to Jerusalem in 2000. Greek Orthodox Archbishop Christobulos says all Christian groups must approve before work can begin. (MA 11/20 in WNC 11/23)

1 Hizballah mbr. is killed in clash with IDF in s. Lebanon. (VOL 11/23 in WNC 11/24)

20 NOVEMBER

Israel carries out 1st stage of FRD. (MM 11/20; YA 11/20 in WNC 11/23; NYT, WT 11/21; RE 11/22 in WNC 11/24; MEI, PR 11/27) (see Peace Monitor)


Israel, Britain sign a 10-yr. military co-operation pact aimed at facilitating joint research in defense technologies, especially naval high-tech, unmanned aerial vehicles. (JP 11/30)

Italian court rejects Turkey's request for extradition of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, citing law that bars extradition to country that has the death penalty. Ocalan, head of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), is freed fr. custody but ordered to stay in Rome. Turkey orders boycott of Italian goods in protest. (RAI Televideo Teletex 11/20 in WNC 11/23; NYT 11/21; AT1 11/21 in WNC 11/24; WP, WT 11/22; MM 11/23; NYT 11/24; CSM 11/30) (see 11/12)

21 NOVEMBER

Body of a Palestinian woman is found nr. Neve Daniel settlement nr. Hebron. PA claims she was murdered by settlers. (ITV 11/23 in WNC 11/30)

22 NOVEMBER

In Washington, Israeli Finance M Yaakov Neeman, DMin. Dir. Gen. Ilan Biran meet with senior U.S. officials to assure them that the $1.2 b. aid that the U.S. plans to give Israel will not be used directly for settlements. An Israeli-U.S. team is formed to complete details of the aid package within 1 mo. for submission to Congress in mid-1/99. (Globes [Internet] 11/22; MM 11/23; Globes [Internet] 11/23 in WNC 11/30) (see 11/19)

Israel, Jordan discuss bilateral trade issues, Israeli obstacles to Jordanian trade with the occupied territories. (JT 11/23 in WNC 11/30) (see Peace Monitor)


Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails begin hunger strike to protest Israel's release of criminals, rather than political prisoners. (CSM 11/23; MM 11/25; IDF Radio 11/26 in WNC 11/30; MEI 12/11) (see 11/20)

Israel approves construction of high-tech industrial center, engineering school at the Kriyat Arba settlement. (AFP [Internet] 11/22; PR 11/27)

Jewish settlers occupy abandoned rail station at Sebastia in the West Bank; demand
government permission to open a religious seminary, museum there. Settlers also occupy hilltops nr. Bethlehem, nr. Nablus. (ITV 11/22 in WNC 11/24)

**IDF** demolishes **Palestinian home** in Taybeh nr. Hebron. (PR 1/8)

A wk. after avoiding U.S. airstrikes by resuming cooperation with the UN (see 11/15), **Iraq** rebuffs a **UN** request for documents. U.S. warns that withholding documents alone could trigger airstrikes. (NYT 11/23; WT 11/24)

With government permission, **Jordanian women's groups, opposition parties** stage 2d pro-**Iraq** rally in Amman. (JT 11/23 in WNC 11/24) (see 11/17)

### 23 NOVEMBER


**Israel**, the **PA** hold talks on selecting the remaining 500 Palestinian prisoners to be released under the **Wye** agmt., but reach impasse. (ITV 11/23 in WNC 11/24)

In Gaza, **1,500 Palestinians** demonstrate against the **PA** for failing to secure **Israel**'s release of political prisoners, attempt to break into PA negotiator Abbas's home but are pushed back by PA police. (JT [Internet] 11/24; MM 11/25; MEI 12/11)


**U.S. Amb. to Qatar Paul Theros** says that the U.S. is building its largest military "warehouse" in **Qatar**, prepositioning equipment but not troops. (WT 11/24)

In s. Lebanon, 3 **civilians** are injured, houses are damaged by **IDF** shelling. 1 **IDF** soldier is killed, 2 **South Lebanon Army (SLA)** soldiers are wounded in **Hizballah** attack. (RL 11/23 in WNC 11/24; MA 11/24 in WNC 11/30)

### 24 NOVEMBER


In Gaza, **Jordan**, the **PA** hold economic talks, sign several protocols to promote co-operation. (Petra-JNA 11/24 in WNC 11/30)

On a visit to 3 West Bank settlements, **Netanyahu** promises settlement expansion but cautions that "this issue must be coordinated behind closed doors with the army and not in front of the media"; says, "The dry days are over. Our policy is to grow and expand." (MM 11/24)

**Mossad** chief of operations resigns over the arrest of 2 agents in **Cyprus**. (NYT, WP 11/25; JP 11/30, 12/7) (see 11/18)

New **Lebanese pres. Emile Lahoud** is sworn in. (VOL 11/24 in WNC 11/30; MM, NYT, WP, WT 11/25)

In London, **U.S. Asst. Secy. of State Martin Indyk** meets with 16 **Iraqi opposition leaders**; nominates new dissident leader Adnan al-Pachachi, a fmr. FM, to form a united Iraqi opposition movement. (WT 11/26) (see 10/31)

**OPEC** producers hold emergency mtg. in Vienna to discuss sharp drop in oil prices. (WT 11/25, 12/17)

### 25 NOVEMBER

In Paris, **Egyptian pres. Husni Mubarak, Arafat** discuss Wye implementation. (MENA 11/25 in WNC 11/30)

To cement his majority in the Knesset and cabinet, PM **Netanyahu** strikes tentative deal with **Gersher party head David Levy**, who resigned as PM in 1/98 after denouncing Netanyahu's government, to rejoin the cabinet. Both Netanyahu, FM **Sharon** cancel trips abroad to shore up coalition. (MM 11/25; NYT, WP, WT 11/26; WT 11/27; MA 11/29, 11/30 in WNC 12/4; MM 12/4; JP 12/7)

Government of **Turkish PM Mesut Yilmaz** falls in a no-confidence vote over corruption allegations. (MM, NYT, WP 11/26; MEI 12/11)

**Iranian Majles delegation** visits **Lebanon**. (IRNA 11/25 in WNC 11/30)

### 26 NOVEMBER


Israeli Agriculture Min. reveals that in 1998 it transferred NIS 17.1 m. fr. its budget to the Zionist Federation's Settlement Dept. to build pools, yeshivas, clubs, auditoriums in, set up paramilitary programs for, absorb immigrants into Jewish settlements. (MA 11/27 in WNC 11/30)

In s. Lebanon, 2 IDF soldiers are killed, 4 are injured by Hizballah roadside bombs, bringing to 5 the number of soldiers killed there in the past 10 days. Netanyahu agrees to review Israeli security arrangements in s. Lebanon. (MM 11/26; LPA 11/26, IDF Radio 11/27 in WNC 11/30; MM, WP, WT 11/27)

27 NOVEMBER

PM Netanyahu cuts short a trip to Britain to brief PM Tony Blair on the Wye agmt., cancels trip to Spain as a result of death of 2 IDF soldiers in s. Lebanon 11/26; says Lebanese government is “directly responsible” for Hizballah's war on Israel. (MM 11/27; YA 11/27 in WNC 11/30; NYT, WP, WT 11/28; MEI 12/11)

Dir. of the PM’s Bureau Uri Elitzur calls on the YESHA settlers council to take any steps that encourage settlement, including initiating new West Bank encampments, because “you don’t know how long this government will last and what will be the depth of the further withdrawal.” (MA 11/27 in WNC 11/30)

Jordanian government bans large pro-Iraq rally planned for today by Jordan's opposition parties. Mu'ta University administration dissolves its Islamist-dominated student council and suspends 8 students for holding demonstrations against the Wye agmt. (JT 11/28, 11/30 in WNC 12/1) (see 11/22)

28 NOVEMBER

Palestinians demonstrating for the release of Palestinian political prisoners clash with Israeli police in East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron. 19 Palestinians are arrested, 35 injured. Demonstrations in 4 other PA-controlled towns are peaceful. (WP, WT 11/29; PR 12/4; JP 12/7; MEI 12/11)

29 NOVEMBER

In Jericho, the Palestinian-Israeli Steering and Monitoring Comm. (PISM) discusses disputes over prisoner release, settlement expansion, confiscation of Palestinian land for bypass roads. (NYT 11/30; MEI 12/11)


On the eve of the Washington donor mtg., the Sunday Times of London reports that $20 m. in EU aid earmarked for housing projects for needy Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza has been used to build luxury apartments for Arafat supporters. (WT 11/30; PR 12/4; MEI 12/11; JP 12/14)

PM Netanyahu convenes special cabinet session to reassess Israel's occupation of s. Lebanon amid public outcry over increasing number of IDF casualties there. (20 soldiers have been killed in s. Lebanon this year, including 7 in the past 2 wks., compared to 39 last yr.) U.S. Amb. Edward Walker warns Netanyahu against harsh retaliation against Lebanon. Lebanese pres. Lahoud says Israel is only testing the new regime, he will not submit to Israeli blackmail. (WP, WT 11/29; ITV, RL 11/29 in WNC 12/1; MM 11/30; MM, WT 12/1; MM 12/2; JP 12/7; MEI 12/11)

In Gaza, PA police block Israeli trucks carrying building supplies to Netzarim settlement. IDF counters by blocking VIP entrance to Gaza to PA officials, while settlers block road nr. Netzarim to Palestinian traffic. (NYT 11/30)

IDF demolishes Palestinian home in East Jerusalem. (LAW 11/30; PR 1/8)

30 NOVEMBER

International donors conference called for under Wye is held in Washington. Donors pledge $3.2 b. in aid to the PA for the next 5 yrs. (MM, NYT 11/30; MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/1; YA 12/1 in WNC 12/2; al-Ahram 12/3 in WNC 12/4; MM, PR 12/4; MM 12/9; MEI 12/11; JP 12/14) (see Peace Monitor)

Israel’s Housing Min. approves plans for 490 new housing units in Kachov Ya'acov settlement, more than tripling the size of the West Bank enclave. (NYT, WT 12/2)

IDF demolishes 2d Palestinian home in East Jerusalem. (LAW 12/3; PR 1/8)

PM Netanyahu, DM Yitzhak Mordechai rules out unilateral withdrawal of IDF troops fr. s. Lebanon. (WP 12/1) (see 11/29)

Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri says he will not form new government under Pres. Lahoud. Economists worry that losing the billionaire real estate mogul as PM will hurt the economy. Hizballah says that it will not
participate in the new government since it offers no significant political change from the old one. (MM 11/30; MBC, RL, al-Safir, VOL 11/30 in WNC 12/1; MM, WP, WT 12/1; MM 12/2; al-Ahad 12/4 in WNC 12/14; MEI 12/11)

1 DECEMBER

Lebanese pres. Lahoud taps Salim al-Huss to head a new government. Huss, a U.S.-trained economist, was PM during the 1975–90 civil war. (RL 12/1 in WNC 12/2; MM 12/2; RL 12/2, 12/3 in WNC 12/4; MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/3; SA 12/3 in WNC 12/7; MEI 12/11)

1 SLA mbr. is wounded in a clash with Hizballah in s. Lebanon. (VOL 12/1 in WNC 12/2)

2 DECEMBER

In Ramallah, Palestinians ambush an IDF patrol car, beat 1 soldier. Israel suspends FRD until the PA complies with a new list of demands, including publicly abandoning plans to declare a state in 5/99, accepting Israeli criteria for prisoner releases, halting all acts of incitement and violence. U.S. rejects demands, says accord “should be implemented as signed.” IDF subdues the demonstration, injuring 11 Palestinians. (ITV 12/2 in WNC 12/4; MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/3; MM 12/4; MEI 12/11)

A Palestinian is stabbed to death in East Jerusalem. During the funeral, mourners set fire to an Israeli car and stone Israeli police, who fire rubber bullets. Riot continues for several hrs. (MM 12/2; LAW, NYT, WP, WT 12/3; PR 12/11; JP 12/14)

IDF demolishes 7 Palestinian homes in the Jordan Valley. (AFP [Internet] 12/2)

Turkish pres. Suleyman Demirel taps veteran left-wing politician Bulent Ecevit to form a new government. (MM 12/3) (see 11/25)

3 DECEMBER

PM Netanyahu says that IDF soldier ambushed in Ramallah 12/2 should have been carrying a loaded weapon, followed open-fire rules. (MM, WT 12/4; PR 12/11)

Palestinian demonstrations continue in East Jerusalem. Six Israeli policemen, 3 Palestinians are injured; 19 Palestinians are arrested. (WP 12/4; YA 12/4 in WNC 12/7)

4 DECEMBER

State Dept. says that Israel’s 11/20 prisoner release met Wye obligations. (WJW 12/10; MEI 12/11; JP 12/14)

Lebanese PM Huss presents his new government. Huss will also hold the FMin. portfolio. (RL 12/4 in WNC 12/7; MM 12/8, 12/9)

5 DECEMBER

Egypt’s Pres. Mubarak arrives in Ankara for 2-day talks with Turkey’s Pres. Demirel on boosting political, economic cooperation. (MM 12/7; MENA 12/9 in WNC 12/11) (see Peace Monitor)

Mr. Ramallah, IDF breaks up demonstration by 300 Palestinians protesting Israel’s release of criminals 11/20, new conditions to Wye implementation issued 12/2; injures 14. 5 Palestinians are injured in similar clashes in Bethlehem. PA Prisoners’ Affairs M Hisham ‘Abd al-Ra’iziq, 1,700 Palestinian prisoners begin hunger strike. (WT 12/6; WP, WT 12/7; MM 12/9; MEI 12/11; PR 12/18)

IDF demolishes 5 Palestinian homes, animal pens in Jiftlik nr. Nablus. (PR 1/8)

6 DECEMBER

PA announces end of amnesty period to legally register weapons, begins confiscating unlicensed weapons. (PR 12/11) (see 12/18)

Citing recent prisoner release demonstrations, PM Netanyahu accuses PA of “willfully fomenting violence,” says he will not carry out next stage of FRD set for 12/18. (WT 12/7)

Gesher MK Levy decides against rejoining Israel’s coalition government, accuses Netanyahu of deception in trying to entice him back. (MM, NYT, WP 12/7; MA, YA 12/8 in WNC 12/11; MEI 12/11) (see 11/25)

7 DECEMBER

In Washington, Israeli FM Sharon informs Pres. Clinton, Secy. Albright that Israel will not carry out the 2d stage of the FRD by 2/18, claiming PA has violated “every paragraph” of Wye, warns Clinton not to raise Palestinian expectations during his upcoming visit. Sharon asks CIA Dir. George Tenet to reconsider his opposition to spy for Israel Jonathan Pollard’s release (see Peace Monitor in JPS 110). (MM 12/8; WJW 12/10)

Knesset postpones no-confidence vote on Netanyahu to 12/21 in light of Pres. Clinton’s trip to the region this weekend. (MM 12/7; MM, NYT, WT 12/8; MA 12/8, IDF Radio 12/9 in WNC 12/11; WJW 12/10; MEI 12/11)

In Nablus, PA police clash with 100s of Palestinians demonstrating against Israel’s refusal to release political prisoners, injuring 19. Demonstrators set fire to 2 police cars, a
bus. 50 Palestinians are injured, 1 is killed in other West Bank clashes with the IDF. 4 Israeli border policemen, 2 settlers are also injured. (NYT, WP, WT 12/8; MM 12/9; PR 12/11)

The U.S. drops Iran fr. list of major drug-producing countries, saying it has largely eliminated the illegal opium trade. (WT 12/8)

3-day Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) mtg. opens in Abu Dhabi. FMs fr. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE discuss recent mtgs. with U.S. Secy. of State Albright in Washington, where Albright asked them to come up with new ideas on how to deal with the Iraqi government, how the Iraqi opposition could be used. (MM 12/7, 12/8, 12/10, 12/16) (see 11/24)

8 DECEMBER

U.S. special envoy Ross meets with PM Netanyahu regarding Pres. Clinton’s upcoming visit. Netanyahu gives him a list of alleged PA violations of Wye. Afterward, Ross publicly condemns Palestinian demonstrations on the prisoner release issue, restates that Israel did not promise at Wye to release specific types of Palestinian prisoners. (MM 12/8)

Arafat breaks off an EU tour to return to the occupied territories to oversee containment of Palestinian clashes, holds 3-hr. mtg. with U.S. envoy Ross. (ITV 12/8 in WNC 12/11; NYT 12/9)

U.S.-Israeli-PA anti-incitement comm. meets in Jerusalem. (YA 12/9 in WNC 12/11) (see Peace Monitor)

PM Netanyahu pledges millions of shekels to Qadim, Ganim settlements for construction of roads, fences, lighting, increased IDF surveillance; promises additional NIS 5 m. to Ganim, Qadim, Hermesh, Sanur settlements for kindergartens, recreation centers. (YA 12/9 in WNC 12/11)

9 DECEMBER

Palestinians across the occupied territories stage most violent protests in 7 mos. to mark the 11th anniversary of the beginning of the intifada. PM Netanyahu claims PA is deliberately escalating violence against Clinton’s visit. IDF responds with percussion grenades, rubber-coated bullets, live ammunition, leaving 1 Palestinian dead, some 200 injured. The worst clashes are in Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah. In Jericho, Palestinians throw rocks through the windows of the new Oasis casino. Settlers threaten to stage their own demonstrations; ask IDF permission to open fire on Palestinians who approach their border fences. Hamas spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin joins prisoners’ hunger strike (see 12/5). (CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/10; YA 12/10 in WNC 12/14)

Israel’s High Court unanimously votes to overturn 50-yr.-old statute exempting Ultraorthodox Jews fr. serving in the IDF. (NYT, WP, WT 12/10)

IDF court-martials soldier who was ambushed, beaten by Palestinians in Ramallah 12/3 for not carrying a loaded weapon, leaving his post without permission. Top IDF cmdrs. say that he should have shot his attackers. (WP, WT 12/10; PR 12/11; JP 12/14)

Acting on Israeli complaints, PA police raid a Palestinian factory in Hebron manufacturing counterfeit compact discs of Israeli artists. (YA 12/9 in WNC 12/14)

More than 80% of settlers in Ganim sign draft bill prepared by Labor, saying that they would evacuate the settlement in exchange for financial compensation. (ITV 12/9 in WNC 12/14) (see 12/8)

Iraq refuses to accommodate UN Special Comm. (UNSCOM) weapons inspectors demanding access to Ba’th party offices. (CSM, WT 12/10; WP 12/11)

10 DECEMBER

In Gaza, the PLO Central Council approves Arafat’s 1/98 letter to Clinton, annulling clauses of the PLO charter calling for Israel’s destruction. (NYT, WP, WT 12/11; MM 12/14) (see Peace Monitor)

PM Netanyahu orders crackdown on Palestinian demonstrations in Israeli-controlled areas in advance of Clinton visit. (Reuters [Internet] 12/10)

7 fmr. U.S. defense secs. (Frank Carlucci, Richard Cheney, Melvin Laird, Elliott Richardson, Donald Rumsfeld, James Schlesinger, Caspar Weinberger) send letter to Pres. Clinton urging him not to free Pollard. (WT 12/11) (see 12/7)

U.S. sends 3 Patriot antimissile batteries fr. Germany to Israel. On 11/9 during the last round of tensions with Iraq, the U.S. promised Israel that it would redeploy Patriots fr. Europe to Israel for extra defense in case of a U.S. attack on Iraq. (WP 12/20)

11 DECEMBER

The U.S. calls on the PA to halt hunger strikes, criticisms of the prisoner release; speed confiscations of illegal weapons, reduction in number of PA police. (NYT 12/12)
Israel rejects U.S. compromise formula for release of Palestinian political prisoners, reaffirms it will not implement 2d stage of FRD unless the full Palestine National Council (PNC) votes to annul the PLO charter. Nr. Qalqilya, the IDF opens fire on Palestinians demonstrating for the release of political prisoners, killing 2, wounding 27. (MM 12/11; ITV 12/11, 12/12 in WNC 12/15; LAW, WP, WT 12/12)

One of Israel's most wanted, Hamas mbr. Yahya al-Gul, escapes fr. a PA prison in Gaza, where he had been held since 3/98. PA places his family under house arrest. (PR 1/15)

In Gaza, 200 mbrs. of Palestinian opposition parties, Hamas, 8 PC mbrs., hold conference to denounce the Wye agmt., annulment of the PLO charter, call on PLO mbrs. to boycott 12/14 PNC mtg. (WT 12/12) (see Peace Monitor)

UNSCOM carries out 14 surprise inspections without Iraqi interference. (WP 12/12) (see 12/9)

Lebanon files protest with the UN Security Council (UNSC) against repeated Israeli mock raids over Beirut since 12/9. (RL 12/11 in WNC 12/14)

12 DECEMBER

As the House approves 4 articles of impeachment against him in Washington, Pres. Clinton arrives in Tel Aviv on 1st stop of 4-day visit. At the airport, PM Netanyahu offers Clinton a "lukewarm" greeting, warns that the Wye agmt. is unraveling, says he will not halt his criticism of the PA, which he accuses of violating every clause of the Wye accord. (ITV, MENA 12/12, JT 12/13 in WNC 12/15; NYT, WP, WT 12/13; GIU, NYT 12/14; PR 12/18)

In Damascus, 8 PLO opposition groups, Hamas, Islamic Jihad open 2-day conference to reaffirm opposition to the Oslo process, adherence to PLO charter. Jordan prevents 32 Palestinians fr. crossing border to attend. (JT, SA 12/12, ITV 12/13, JT 12/14 in WNC 12/15; MM 12/14; al-Majd 12/14 in WNC 12/17; MEI 12/25; al-Watan al-Arabi 1/1 in WNC 1/5) (see Doc. B2)

Jordanian PM Fayiz al-Tarawnah arrives in Gaza for coordination mtg. with Arafat. Both men call on Palestinian prisoners to end their hunger strike (see 12/11). (RJ 12/12 in WNC 12/15; al-Majd 12/14 in WNC 12/16)

In Gaza, 100s of Palestinians demonstrate against Israel's refusal to release political prisoners. During similar demonstration in Bethlehem, PA police, IDF clash with Palestinians, leaving 7 injured. (NYT, WT 12/13)

Jordanian security arrests 8 Palestinians in Baq'a refugee camp for planning rallies for 12/14 to protest Arafat's annulment of the PLO charter. (JT 12/14 in WNC 12/15; al-Dustur 12/15 in WNC 12/16, 12/17)

13 DECEMBER

In Israel, Pres. Clinton urges continued implementation of Wye accord, notes progress on both sides. U.S. special envoy Ross tells PM Netanyahu that Israel must recognize that the Palestinians are entitled to aspirations to statehood. Secy. Albright asks Israeli FM Sharon to find a "creative" way to make sure that the 2d stage of FRD takes place 12/18 as called for, but he says he cannot help. (MM, NYT, WP 12/14; PR 12/18)


In Cairo, Egyptian, Jordanian FMs discuss final status talks, their need to coordinate with the PA on all future steps related to the peace process. (MENA, RE 12/14 in WNC 12/15)

PA Preventive Security Force (PSF) arrests Islamic Jihad leader Abdullah Shami on incitement charges for statements to the press that he would not hesitate to kill Pres. Clinton. (WT 1/23)

14 DECEMBER

Clinton flies into Gaza airport by helicopter to attend the PNC session on the PLO charter, becoming the 1st sitting U.S. president to set foot on Palestinian soil. PNC mbrs., other officials approve the nullification of clauses of the PLO charter by show of hands. PM Netanyahu says he is satisfied but still will not carry out the next stage of the FRD on 12/18. U.S. says it will not press Netanyahu on the issue because of the upcoming Knesset no-confidence vote 12/21. (CSM, MM 12/14; al-Aswaq, al-Dustur, IDF Radio, ITV, JT, MENA, al-Ra'i, RE, al-Safir 12/12 in WNC 12/15; IDF Radio, ITV 12/14, AFP, JT, MA, RE 12/15 in WNC 12/16; CSM, NYT, WP, WT 12/15; WJW 12/17; ITAR-TASS
12/17 in WNC 12/21; Tishrin 12/16, al-Thawra 12/17 in WNC 12/28; PR 12/18; JP 12/21; MEI 12/25 (see Docs. B3, D)

Hillary Clinton visits a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza, the Israeli-Palestinian town of Neve Shalom. (CSM 12/14; WP, WT 12/15; PR 12/18)

U.S. Commerce Secy. William Daley attends the official opening of the Qarni industrial zone. (JP 12/21, 12/28)

Sey. Albright meets with Israeli DM Mordechai to discuss Wye implementation, Lebanon. (IDF Radio 12/14 in WNC 12/15)

Palestinians in Lebanese, Syrian refugee camps demonstrate against Wye.agmt, amendment of the PLO charter. (VOL 12/14 in WNC 12/15; SATN 12/14 in WNC 12/16)

Jordan confirms that it recently deported, but did not turn over to the IDF, 3 Palestinians carrying PA passports fr. the kingdom because they are mbrs. of Hamas's Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades, pose a security threat. (JT 12/15 in WNC 12/16; al-Dustur 12/15 in WNC 12/17)

In the West Bank, 2 Palestinians are wounded in clash with IDF. (AFP [Internet] 12/15)

Iran announces it has signed a deal with Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch/Shell and the British Lasmco to explore Caspian Sea oil reserves. The $19.8 m. deal is just below the threshold set by the U.S. under its Iran Libya Sanctions Act, which threatens economic reprisals against any company investing more than $20 m. in those countries' oil industries. (WT 12/16)

15 DECEMBER

Pres. Clinton meets with Netanyahu, Arafat at Erez border crossing, where Netanyahu gives him a list of 12 demands that the PA must meet before Israel will continue Wye implementation. Clinton warns that it would be "unfortunate" if Israel fell too far behind in the implementation schedule. He then attends tree lighting ceremony in Bethlehem with Arafat, tours Masada with Netanyahu. (MM 12/15; ITV, QY, RE 12/15 in WNC 12/16; CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/16; JT 12/16 in WNC 12/17; MA 12/16 in WNC 12/21; al-Quds 12/17, MA 12/18 in WNC 12/22; al-Ba'th 12/16 in WNC 12/28; MM, PR 12/18) (see Doc. C1)

PSMC meets to discuss all pending peace process issues. The only agmt. reached is to create an "informal channel" to discuss the prisoner release issue. (ITV 12/15 in WNC 12/16; CSM, NYT, WP, WT 12/16)

Secy. Albright leaves the U.S. delegation in Israel to make side trip to Amman to meet with Crown Prince Hassan. (JTV 12/15 in WNC 12/17; NYT 12/16; MM 12/18)

UNSCOM head Richard Butler reports to the UN that by failure to comply with 5 of 300 recent inspections requests, Iraq has failed to honor the promises of cooperation that prompted Pres. Clinton to call off a major military strike 11/14. U.S. officials say that the Clinton administration played a direct role in shaping Butler's text during multiple conversations with him 12/14 at secure sites in the U.S. mission to the UN, convinced him to order inspectors out of Iraq today without informing UN. (NYT, WP, WT 12/16; AFP, RJ 12/16 in WNC 12/17; NYT 12/17; Tishrin 12/19 in WNC 12/28; al-Akhbar, MENA 12/21 in WNC 12/22; MEI 12/25) (see 12/13)

Palestinian prisoners end hunger strike. (ITV 12/15 in WNC 12/16; MEI 12/25) (see 12/12)

16 DECEMBER

Immediately upon his return to the U.S., Pres. Clinton convenes his senior advisers to "discuss the UNSCOM report on Iraq"; they unanimously recommend a strike. Clinton orders forces in the Gulf to attack immediately; 1st sorties reach Iraq around 5 P.M., leaving 2 Iraqis (Iraq says 25) dead, 30 injured. A token force of 18 British planes takes part. House postpones indefinitely its vote on impeachment, set for tomorrow. Operation Desert Fox is expected to conclude in 3-4 days, before the beginning of Ramadan. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chmn. Gen. Henry Shelton says decision was made in 11/98 to attack immediately if the UNSCOM report was negative. However, sources say that the White House informed the JCS 12/13 that a strike would be ordered this wk. Various congressmen say that they were briefed on the plan 3 wks. ago. Arab states are silent. France, Russia condemn the operation. Canada, Japan support it. (RJ 12/16 in WNC 12/17; ITV 12/16, AFP, ATL, JT 12/17 in WNC 12/21; CSM, NYT, WP, WT 12/17; MM, WP 12/18; MEI 12/25; GIU 1/5, 1/6)

PM Netanyahu says that he is prepared to call early elections unless the Knnesset ratifies his hard-line policies on Wye implementation as outlined in his 12-point list of demands given to Clinton 12/15. (NYT, WP, WT 12/17; ITV 12/20 in WNC 12/22)

Israeli Finance M Neeman resigns in frustration over PM Netanyahu's political ma-
nipulation of the budget process. Netanyahu takes over the finance portfolio, giving himself control over budget allocations, which he could use to his political advantage if early elections are called. DM Mordechai is also reportedly threatening to leave over Wye implementation delays. (MM 12/16; MA, YA 12/16 in WNC 12/17; MM, NYT 12/17; NYT 12/19; WP 12/22; MEI 12/25; Globes [Internet] 1/15 in WNC 1/14)

Peace Now reports that new housing starts in settlements more than doubled in 1998 compared to 1997. In the 1st half of 1998, construction began on 1,420 new units, up 136% fr. the same period last yr. In the 2d half of 1998, 640 units were started, up 121%. (Associated Press [Internet] 12/16)

17 DECEMBER


Across the West Bank and in Gaza City, Palestinians protest the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. The largest demonstration, attended by 3,000 Palestinians, is held in Nablus. In al-Birch, the IDF shoots, kills 1 Palestinian, injures 16 others. (WP, WT 12/18; MEI 12/25)

In Egypt, the government expresses its "regret" over the U.S.-led strike on Iraq; the Arab League, al-Azhar's chief cleric denounce use of military force; Cairo University students go on hunger strike to protest; Egyptian police lock American University in Cairo students on campus to keep them fr. demonstrating. (MENA, RE 12/17 in WNC 12/21)

18 DECEMBER

On the 3d day of its attack on Iraq, the U.S. can confirm that only 18 of its 89 targets have been severely damaged or destroyed, despite having fired more laser-guided mis-

siles in 2 days than during the entire 1991 Gulf War. Only U.S. planes stationed in Kuwait, Oman have flown; Saudi Arabia, Turkey have not permitted their bases to be used as staging grounds. (ATL, ITV 12/18 in WNC 12/22; NYT, WP, WT 12/19; MEI 12/25)

For the 2d day, U.S.-British strikes on Iraq prompt street protests across the Middle East. 15,000 Palestinians demonstrate in Nablus, while 1,000s of others protest in Bethlehem, Gaza City, Hebron, Jinin, Ramallah. PA police break up protest in Gaza City only; the PA closes some television, radio stations, news bureaus for reporting on the demonstrations. Syria's grand mufti denounces the U.S.-led operation. Pro-Iraq demonstrations are held in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Yemen. (MM 12/18; SANA 12/18, al-Ra'i 12/19, JT 12/20 in WNC 12/22; NYT, WT 12/19; MEI 12/25)

Fmr. UNSCOM chief inspector Scott Ritter claims that UNSCOM head Butler chose sites for inspection that he knew would provoke the Iraqis, then ordered halt to inspections on 12/13 to meet U.S. bombing timetable; also says that the White House national security staff helped draft Butler's 12/15 report to ensure it contained sufficiently tough language to justify an attack. Butler denies showing his report to the U.S. in advance of its release, but National Security Adviser (NSA) Sandy Berger admits Butler briefed him personally 12/13. (WT 12/19; WP 12/20; MENA 12/20, al-Akhbar, MA 12/21 in WNC 12/22) (see 12/16)

PA police arrest 4 leading Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) mbrs., 8 journalists at march marking PFLP's 31st anniversary. (NYT, WT 12/19)

Knesset approves additional NIS 20 m. to fund expanding settlements in the West Bank, Golan. (PR 1/1)

19 DECEMBER

Voting along party lines, the House finds (228-206) grounds for Pres. Clinton's impeachment on 2 counts of perjury, obstruction of justice in the Monica Lewinsky case, moving the proceedings to the Senate. The Senate may dismiss the case, censure the pres., or vote to impeach. Clinton says that he will not resign. (NYT, WP, WT 12/20; WJW 12/24; MEI 12/25) (see 9/21)

Ramadan begins. U.S., Britain end their operation against Iraq after carrying out 650 sorties over 4 nights against 97 targets, only ½ of which were severely damaged or de-
stroayed. At least 68 Iraqis have been killed. U.S. believes Iraq could restore its capabilities in a yr., reserves the right to use force again in the future. Albright describes U.S. policy toward Iraq as “containment plus regime change.” (NYT 12/19; ITAR-TASS, MENA 12/19, MENA, YA 12/20, MA 12/21 in WNC 12/22; NYT, WP, WT 12/20; MM, WP, WT 12/21; Tishrin 12/21 in WNC 12/28; WJW 12/24; MEI 12/25)

In Syria, 1,000s protest against the U.S.-led attack on Iraq; more than 100 climb the U.S. emb. to tear down the flag and break into, vandalize the amb.’s residence; others attack the British cultural mission; lawyers strike in solidarity with Iraq. In Egypt, more than 4,000 students at universities across the country demonstrate for 3d day; trade, journalists, teachers unions call for protests; pharmacists agree to boycott U.S., UK medicines. In Jordan, 2,000 students march in protest. In the West Bank, 3,000 Palestinians in Hebron, 2,500 in Janin ignore ban on pro-Iraq demonstrations, clash with the IDF, leaving 100 injured. 15,000 Yemenis hold anti-U.S. march. 2,000 Sudanese protest outside the closed U.S. emb. Lebanon’s grand mufti condemns the U.S.-led operation. (AFP, JTV, MENA, RL, SANA 12/19, JT, SANA 12/20 in WNC 12/22; NYT, WP, WT 12/20; JP 12/21; CSM 12/22; JP 12/28)

PA ends closures of TV, radio, newspaper bureaus imposed 12/18. (Times of London 12/21)

20 DECEMBER

The Israeli cabinet votes unanimously (with 1 abstention) for PM NetanyahU’s request to suspend Wye implementation until the PA meets his 12 new conditions, setting showdown with the Knesset 12/21. (WP, WT 12/21; MA, VOA 12/21 in WNC 12/22; NYT 12/22) (see 12/16)

A small bomb explodes at a gate of Jerusalem’s Old City, injuring 1 Israeli, who is arrested on suspicion of attempting to harm Palestinians. (WT 12/21)

More than 10,000 Jordanians take part in pro-Iraq demonstrations in Amman. (RJ 12/20 in WNC 12/22)

In s. Lebanon, 2 Hizballah mbrs. are killed by IDF shelling. (RL 12/20 in WNC 12/22)

21 DECEMBER

After unsuccessful last-minute attempt to form unity government with the Labor party, PM NetanyahU removes his opposition to a bill calling for early elections, which passes (81-30), thereby avoiding a Knesset no-confidence vote that he was expected to lose. (MM 12/21; MA 12/21 in WNC 12/22; CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 12/22; MA, al-Quds al-Arabi 12/22 in WNC 12/23; CSM 12/25; al-Dustur 12/23 in WNC 12/28; WJW 12/24; MEI 12/25; JP 12/28; MEI 1/15)

In light of Operation Desert Fox, China, France, Russia call for 8-yr. oil embargo on Iraq to be lifted, UNSCOM to be disbanded, UNSCOM head Butler to resign. U.S. warns UN Secy. Gen. Kofi Annan against replacing UNSCOM; says U.S. will compromise on sanctions, disarmament monitoring. (MM 12/21; MA 12/21 in WNC 12/22; MM, WP 12/22)

The Lebanese government restores the right to protest, lifting a 5-yr.-old ban on demonstration imposed in 1993 after anti-Oslo protests led to clashes btwn. the army, Hizballah. (NYT 12/22)

22 DECEMBER

Prominent Likud mbr. Dan Meridor resigns fr. the party to form a centrist party, challenge NetanyahU for PM in upcoming elections. (NYT, WP, WT 12/23; MEI 12/25; JP 1/4; SA 1/8 in WNC 1/12; JP, MEI 1/15)

At Yemen’s request, the Arab League calls an emergency FMs mtg. for 12/30 to discuss the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. (MENA 12/22 in WNC 12/23; MENA, Star 12/24 in WNC 12/28)

In Lebanon, 1,000 demonstrators march toward the U.S. emb. to protest the U.S.-led attack on Iraq (see 12/21). Jordanian pharmacists agree to boycott U.S., UK medicines. (AFP, VOL 12/22 in WNC 12/23; WT 12/23)

U.S. suspends tourist, student, business visas for Syrians indefinitely in response to attack on the U.S. emb. 12/19. (WT 12/23; MM 1/4; WT 1/6)

1 Lebanese woman, 6 children are killed, 1 man, another child are injured in IDF attack on suspected Hizballah base in s. Lebanon. (IDF Radio, RL 12/22 in WNC 12/23; WP, WT 12/23; ITV, MBC, APA [Johannesburg] 12/23, MENA, SA 12/24 in WNC 12/28; Interfax 12/24, VOA 12/26 in WNC 12/29; PR 1/1)

23 DECEMBER

Israeli cabinet secy. Dani Nave resigns to run for a Knesset seat in upcoming elections. He will be replaced on the PISMC by
Tomer Orni, head of the FMin. political team and as cabinet secy. by Gideon Sa’ar. (ITV 12/23 in WNC 12/28; YA 12/27 in WNC 12/29; Prime Minister’s Report 2/1)

PA releases Hamas’s Shaykh Yasin fr. house arrest imposed 10/29. Israel protests PA’s alleged “revolving door” policy. (NYT, WT 12/24; MA 12/24 in WNC 12/28; NYT 12/27; PR 1/1; JP 1/4)

After Ecevit is unable to form a coalition, Turkish pres. Demirel asks independent centrist Yalim Erez to try to form a government. (WP 12/24; ATL 12/24 in WNC 12/28; ATL 1/4; ATL, Milliyet 1/5 in WNC 1/6) (see 12/2)

Jordan’s Lower Parliament issues non-binding statement urging the government to expel U.S., British, Israeli, Kuwaiti diplomats and ignore UN sanctions on Iraq in response to the U.S-led attack on Iraq. Jordan’s 100,000-mbr. professional associations launch campaign to boycott U.S., UK goods. (JT 12/24 in WNC 12/28)

In response to death of 6 civilians in IDF attack 12/22, Hizballah fires 20–30 rockets into n. Israel, injuring 13. (CSM, WP 12/23; NYT, WP, WT 12/24; al-Quds al-Arabi 12/24 in WNC 12/29; PR 1/1; JP 1/4)

24 DECEMBER

Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak resigns fr. the IDF, announces he will challenge Netanyahu for PM. In recent mos., polls have shown that Shahak, a respected military figure but political unknown, could beat Netanyahu in a 2-candidate race by as much as a 15-point margin. Shahak led the Israeli team in FRD discussion with the PA under fmr. PM Yitzhak Rabin. (NYT, WT 12/25; CSM 1/8)

25 DECEMBER

Confirming 8/10 rumors, PM Netanyahu admits that he held 10 secret mtgs. with Labor chmn. Barak btwn. 5/98 and 7/98 on forming a unity government. Discussions included how to conduct future negotiations with Syria, final status talks with the PA. (ITV 12/26 in WNC 12/29; YA 12/25 in WNC 12/30; Vestl 12/31 in WNC 1/20) (see Peace Monitor)

26 DECEMBER

In Cairo, Arafat briefs Pres. Mubarak on Wye implementation, Pres. Clinton’s visit to the region. The pair agree to hold mtg. with Jordan to coordinate plans to press Israel to implement the Wye agmt., halt settlement expansion. Arafat asks Mubarak to revive the Egyptian-French initiative for an international summit on the peace process. (MENA 12/26 in WNC 12/29; SA 1/3, MENA 1/3, 1/4 in WNC 1/5; AFP 1/6 in WNC 1/7)

Claiming that Israel has orchestrated early elections to freeze the peace process, the PA lobbies the U.S. to convene high-level mtg. in Washington in 1/99 to force Israel to implement Wye. (WT 12/27; CSM 12/28; JP 1/4, 1/11)

Iraq threatens to shoot down U.S., British planes flying surveillance in the no-fly zones; fires artillery at British planes in the no-fly zone, causing no damage. (WP, WT 12/27; WT 12/28; GIU 1/5, 1/6)

27 DECEMBER

Jordan holds emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) to rally support for Iraq. Iraq sends delegation; Kuwait does not. Iraq protests that the mtg.’s final statement (which says U.S.-led attack jeopardized regional peace, worsened economic hardships for Iraqis) is not strong enough, should have condemned U.S. intentions to overthrow the Iraqi regime. (al-Dustur, JT, JTV, MBC, al-Ra’i 12/27 in WNC 12/29; CSM 12/28; al-Bayan, al-Dustur 12/29 in WNC 12/31)

28 DECEMBER

Arafat inaugurates Abu Anmar Naval Base in Gaza. (PR 1/1)

Israel’s prominent parties set 5/17 as date for early elections; run-off for PM will be held 6/1 if necessary. In response, Arafat backs down on declaring state on 5/4/99, fearing it would provide “political ammunition” to Netanyahu or others. Prominent Likud MK Benjamin Begin quits the party to mount a right-wing challenge for the premiership. (YA 12/28 in WNC 12/29; NYT, WP, WT 12/29; MA 12/29 in WNC 12/30; WP 12/30; WJW 12/31; PR 1/1; MM 1/5; JP 1/11; MEI 1/15)

At the request of the Gulf States, chiefly Saudi Arabia, the Arab League postpones emergency session on Iraq set for 12/30 to 1/24. (MENA 12/28 in WNC 12/29; CSM 12/30; MM 1/4, 1/28)

Israel extends 5%–20% income tax breaks to settlements until 2000. (Globes [Internet] 12/29 in WNC 12/30)

IDF demolishes 2 Palestinian homes in Kafr Harith, West Bank, injuring the owner, his infant son. (LAW 12/30; PR 1/8)
Iraq fires antiaircraft missiles at U.S. planes over the n. no-fly zone. U.S. strikes the missile battery in response, killing 4 Iraqi soldiers, wounding 7. (CSM, NYT, WP, WT 12/29; JTV 12/29 in WNC 12/31; GIU 1/5, 1/6) (see 12/26)

29 DECEMBER

King Hussein leaves the Mayo Clinic after 6 mos. of cancer treatment, goes to his home in Washington. He will also spend time in London before returning to Jordan. (JTV 12/29 in WNC 12/31; NYT 12/30; al-Watan al-Arabi 1/8, al-Majd 1/11 in WNC 1/12; JP 1/11)

Israel’s Environmental M Rafael Eitan announces that he is leaving Tsomet to form a new party, challenge Netanyahu. (WT 12/30; NYT, WT 12/31)

Jewish settlers begin work on 15,000 sq. m. recreation, tourist center in Qattarin on the Golan Heights. (Hatzofe 12/29 in WNC 12/30)

Jordanian government stops large solidarity mtg. to be held in Amman tonight btwn. the Iraq’s National Assembly Speaker Sa’dun Hammadi, in town for the 12/28 APU mtg., and Jordanian political, unionist, independent figures. (al-Bayan 12/29, JT, SA 12/30 in WNC 12/31; SA 1/13 in WNC 1/14) (see 11/27)

Israel assassinates top Hizballah explosives expert Zahi Ahmad Haydar in s. Lebanon. The British Foreign Report claims that the target was actually spiritual leader Shaykh Hassan Nasrallah, but Hizballah discovered the bomb; Haydar was killed trying to dismantle it. (WP, WT 1/2; SA 1/3 in WNC 1/5; MA 1/13 in WNC 1/14; RL 1/16 in WNC 1/20)

30 DECEMBER

Iraq fires on U.S., British jets in the s. no-fly zone. U.S. attacks missile battery in response. (ATL 12/30 in WNC 12/31; NYT, WP, WT 12/31; GIU 1/5, 1/6) (see 12/28)

In s. Lebanon, 1 IDF soldier is killed, 2 are wounded when another IDF patrol opens fire on them by mistake. (WP 12/31)

31 DECEMBER

Citing Hizballah Katyusha attacks 12/23, Israel adopts “more aggressive” policy toward Lebanon that will include attacks on Hizballah bases deep inside Lebanon, preemptive strikes on units planting roadside bombs, destruction of Lebanese infrasturcture if n. Israel is attacked. Lebanon fears Israel is planning an unprovoked attack during run-up to 5/99 elections. (IDF Radio 1/1, IRNA, al-Quds, RL 1/2, YA 1/3 in WNC 1/5; WT 1/2; RL 1/11 in WNC 1/12; MA 1/24 in WNC 1/26)

U.S. temporarily closes emb. in Israel after receiving a “credible” threat. (ITV 12/31 in WNC 1/4, 1/5; NYT, WP, WT 1/1)

The Israeli Housing Min. issues tenders for construction of 1,051 new housing units in West Bank settlements including 651 units in Beitar Illit nr. Jerusalem, where 10,000 ultra-Orthodox settlers live. (NYT 1/1; JP 1/11)

Under IDF protection, Jewish settlers move trailers to hills nr. Nablus, confiscating additional Palestinian land to expand Elon Moreh settlement. (al-Hayat al-Jadida 12/31 in WNC 1/5)

10s of Jordanians stage sit-in outside the U.S. emb. in Amman to protest U.S.-led attack on Iraq. (al-Dustur 1/1 in WNC 1/5)

1 JANUARY

Following 5-mo. internal review of the IDF’s structure and operating doctrine, IDF Chief of Staff Shaul Mufaz announces that major changes in operations are planned over next 2 yrs. (ITV 1/1, YA 1/3 in WNC 1/5; YA 1/12 in WNC 1/13; MM 1/13; YA 1/13 in WNC 1/14; MM 1/14; MA 1/27 in WNC 1/28)

In s. Lebanon, 3 civilians are injured by IDF machine-gun fire. (RL 1/1 in WNC 1/5)

2 JANUARY

In Kafr Harith, West Bank, IDF clashes with Israeli peace activists who attempt to help rebuild 2 Palestinian homes demolished 1/28. (ITV 1/2 in WNC 1/5)

Israeli police detain a Jewish settler for questioning in connection with several acts of vandalism of Palestinian cars in East Jerusalem over the past 2 days. (AFP [Internet] 1/2)

3 JANUARY

FM’s of Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen hold mtg. in Hurghada, Egypt, to coordinate their positions in advance of the 1/24 Arab League special session on Iraq. (MENA 1/3, 1/4 in WNC 1/5; MM 1/5; MENA 1/6 in WNC 1/7; SATN 1/8 in WNC 1/12)

An Egyptian court sentences Israeli David Mineu to life with hard labor for
smuggling drugs into the country. (MENA 1/7 in WNC 1/8)

Long-time Netanyahu ally Avigdor Lieberman launches new party, Yisrael Beiteinu, aimed at rallying support of Russian immigrants for the PM before 5/99 elections. (MM, WP 1/4; MA 1/4 in WNC 1/5; NYT, WP 1/5)

The Israeli Housing Min. says that 7 contractors have submitted plans to build at Jabal Abu Ghunaym/Har Homa settlement site in Jerusalem. (WP 1/4; JP, PR 1/15)

Israeli television reports that 1,100 housing units are being constructed in a new West Bank settlement, Tal Tzviyon, n. of Jerusalem, nr. Ramallah. A total of 7,000 units are planned. (ITV 1/3 in WNC 1/5)

IDF attacks suspected Hizballah bases in s. Lebanon not far fr. Syrian-held positions, wounding 5 Lebanese civilians, 1 Syrian soldier. (MM, WP 1/4; RL, VOL 1/3, AFP, RL 1/4 in WNC 1/5; MM 1/5)

Saudian dissident Osama Bin Laden tells Time Magazine that he “instigated” the 8/7 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya, Tanzania. (CSM 1/4)

4 JANUARY

U.S. emb. in Tel Aviv reopens. (WP, WT 1/5; JP 1/11) (see 12/31)

In Hebron, unidentified gunmen open fire on a van, wounding 2 Jewish gunners. IDF seals the borders of Hebron to prevent Palestinians fr. entering or leaving; imposes curfew on Palestinians in Israeli-controlled sector of the city; shoots rubber bullets at Palestinians who protest the closure, wounding 2. (MM 1/4; AFP, ITV 1/4 in WNC 1/5; CSM, NYT, WP 1/5; MA 1/5 in WNC 1/6; ITV 1/5 in WNC 1/7; WJW 1/7; PR 1/8; MEI 1/15)

In light of “serious complaints” fr. Orthodox MKs, the Knesset institutes regulation barring women fr. wearing miniskirts, tight garments, low-cut/sleeveless shirts, any other “provocative” clothing in the parliament. (WT 1/5)

5 JANUARY

In Washington, Jordan’s King Hussein, Pres. Clinton discuss peace process, Iraq, Jordanian economy. (JTV 1/5 in WNC 1/7; WT 1/6; al-Dustur 1/7 in WNC 1/8)

Confidants say that UN Secy. Gen. Annan has received convincing evidence that UNSCOM inspectors collected eavesdropping intelligence used in U.S. efforts to overthrow the Iraqi regime, is concerned it could undermine UN credibility. UNSCOM head Butler denies the reports. (WP 1/6; MM 1/7)

Kuwait’s Dep. PM Shaykh Sa’ad al-Abdallah al-Sabah visits Jordan’s Crown Prince Hassan; says Jordanian-Kuwaiti ties are developing, Jordan’s emb. in Kuwait City may reopen soon. (MM 1/5; RJ 1/5 in WNC 1/6; RJ 1/5 in WNC 1/7; MM 1/6; al-Dustur, al-Ra’i 1/7 in WNC 1/8; SA 1/9, 1/13 in WNC 1/14)

Jordan’s governor of Irbid bans planned pro-Iraq rally. (al-Dustur 1/6 in WNC 1/7)

In 2 separate incidents, Iraqi planes challenge U.S. planes in the s. no-fly zone but do not shoot. U.S. fires on the 4 planes but misses. (GIU, NYT, WT, WP 1/6; CSM 1/7)

An IDF soldier is seriously wounded in s. Lebanon by a Hizballah remote-controlled bomb. (MM 1/6)

6 JANUARY

In his 1st policy address, Israeli PM candidate Shahak takes out a left-of-center line, favoring resumption of negotiations with the PA, Syria. He says that a Palestinian state is inevitable, but Jerusalem should never be divided; Netanyahu is “dangerous for Israel.” Polls show decline in Shahak’s popularity after the address. (MM 1/6; IDF Radio 1/6 in WNC 1/7; CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/7; YA 1/7 in WNC 1/8; JP 1/15)

Tensions over Hebron closure continue, with IDF shooting, killing 1 Palestinian protester. (NYT 1/7) (see 1/4)

Confirming long-standing Iraqi accusations, U.S. officials admit that for 3 yrs., U.S. spies using diplomatic cover/false identities worked undercover on UNSCOM teams but denies that the U.S. directed UNSCOM intelligence efforts. Officials say eavesdropping devices (“bugs”) supplied to UNSCOM inspectors by Washington provided the U.S. with information used to undermine Saddam Hussein; the idea of using bugs was 1st suggested by fnr. UNSCOM chief inspector Ritter in talks with Israeli intelligence (see Doc. D2 in JPS 110). (MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/7; MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/8; al-Dustur 1/9, YA 1/10 in WNC 1/12; MM 1/13; MEI 1/15, 1/29) (see 1/5)

UNICEF, World Food Program releases the 1st independent report on the effect of U.S.-led attack on Iraq 12/16–19, showing that at least 12 schools and hospitals, a Bagdad water system supplying 300,000 persons, storehouse containing 2,600 tons of rice were hit. (NYT 1/7; WP 1/8)
In the 7th wk. of Turkish government crisis, PM-designate Erci gives up his bid to form a coalition after failing to form a government excluding Islamist parties. Ecevit will try again. (ATL 1/6 in WNC 1/7; CSM, WP 1/7) (see 12/23)

7 JANUARY

Senate opens impeachment trial against Pres. Clinton. (NYT, WP, WT 1/8)

IDF scuffles with 100s of Palestinians protesting the continued closure of Hebron. (WP 1/8)

The IDF demolishes 15 Lebanese homes in Armun, n. of the self-declared security zone, claiming they were used as staging grounds for Hizballah attacks; expels 25 Lebanese civilians, including 16 children, fr. Shab'a village in s. Lebanon. (RL 1/7 in WNC 1/8; RL 1/8 in WNC 1/11)

To fulfill vows to end government corruption, Pres. Lahoud, PM Huss fire 19 top-ranking officials, reshuffle the diplomatic corps; liquidate Ogero, the inefficient state-run telephone maintenance company, whose employees were once paid bonuses by frm. PM Hariri personally. Hariri calls actions “political revenge.” Government says that reform of the 230,000-strong state bureaucracy will last at least 6 mos. (MM 1/13; MEI, MM 1/29)

An Iraqi antiaircraft battery turns radar on U.S. planes flying in the n. no-fly zone. U.S. fires missile at battery in response. 2 Iraqi jets also violate the n. zone. (NYT, WT 1/8)

An Iraqi opposition group, the Center for Human Rights, reports that Iraq has executed 81 political detainees, including army officers, who plotted to kill Pres. Saddam Hussein. (NYT, WT 1/8; see GIU 1/5, 1/6)

8 JANUARY

In Damascus, Egyptian pres. Mubarak, Syrian pres. Hafiz al-Asad discuss peace process, U.S.-led attack on Iraq, need for Arab solidarity; call for Arab summit to discuss Iraq's future ties with Arab countries. (MENA, SATN 1/8 in WNC 1/12; WP 1/9)

Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan meets with King Hussein at the royal residence in London, does not designate a regent when he departs Jordan as is customary. (JTV 1/8 in WNC 1/12)

In response to 1/7 incidents, Hizballah fires mortars at n. Israel, causing no damage, injuries. (RL 1/8 in WNC 1/11)

9 JANUARY

U.S. special envoy Ross returns to the Middle East to follow up on Wye implementation, holds mtg. with PA leadership. (al-Quds 1/10 in WNC 1/13; JP 1/11)

10 JANUARY

IDF heavily shells s. Lebanon, damaging electricity, water installations; damaging 2 Lebanese homes. Lebanon appeals to the international community to press Israel to halt this escalation. (RL 1/10 in WNC 1/12; RL 1/14 in WNC 1/16)

11 JANUARY

U.S., Israel hold final round of talks on how Israel would use the $1.2 b. in special assistance to implement the Wye agmt. U.S. reportedly would disburse the money when the IDF begins the remaining FRDs ordered under Wye. (Globes [Internet] 1/11 in WNC 1/13; Haroze 1/28 in WNC 1/29) (see 11/22)

National security agencies, senior advisers begin to send White House recommendations on Pollard clemency. Clinton has set no deadline on when he will make a decision. 60 senators send letter to Pres. Clinton urging him not to reduce Pollard's sentence. (NYT 1/11; NYT, WP, WT 1/12; WJW, WT 1/14; MM 1/15; New Yorker 1/18; MM 1/21) (see Peace Monitor)

Likud elder statesman Moshe Arens emerges fr. political retirement to challenge his protégé, Netanyahu, for the party's nomination for PM. In 1982, Arens hired Netanyahu, then a furniture salesman, as his political counselor in the Israeli emb. in Washington; promoted Netanyahu's career until his election as PM in 1996. Rafael Eitan will also challenge Netanyahu within Likud. DM Mordechai is considering a run. (MM 1/11; MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/12; MEI 1/15; JP 1/22)

Several Palestinians protesting continued closure of Hebron are injured in clash with the IDF. (al-Hayat al-Jadida [Internet] 1/12)

Kuwait puts its troops on high alert following the Iraqi parliament's approval 1/10 of a statement holding Saudi Arabia, Kuwait fully responsible for the 12/98 U.S.-led attack, reserving the right to seek compensation. Iraq also considered passing a statement revoking recognition of Kuwait's borders but did not. (NYT, WP 1/12; MENA 1/14 in WNC 1/16; MM 1/18)
U.S. fires missiles at 2 Iraqi air defense installations after radar was turned on U.S. planes in the n. no-fly zone. (NYT, WP 1/12)

New pro-secular Turkish government under Pres. Demirel. PM Ecevit takes power, will govern until 4/18 general elections. (MM 1/11; NYT, WP 1/12; MEI 1/15)

12 JANUARY

In Tel Aviv, U.S. special envoy Ross says that the U.S. plans to play a much less active role in final status negotiations, thinks “permanent status is not something that should be mediated.” (USIS Washington File 1/12; NYT, WP 1/13; PR 1/15)

After 4 yrs., Lebanon lifts travel restrictions on Palestinians, dropping requirement for Palestinians to obtain visas to return to Lebanon. (RL 1/12 in WNC 1/13; NYT 1/13; RL 1/16 in WNC 1/20)

PM Netanyahu meets with U.S. millionaire Irving Moskovitz, who is in Jerusalem to decide which right-wing candidate for PM he will support financially in the 5/17 elections. Netanyahu gives assurances that he will not halt Moskovitz’s construction of 132 units in the Palestinian neighborhood of Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem. Congressman Michael Forbes (R-NY) is accompanying Moskovitz. (MM, WP 1/14; MM 1/21; JP 1/22; PR 1/29)

In what police, FBI term a sophisticated operation, burglars break into offices of prominent Washington polling firm Greenberg Quinlan Research, which is advising Israeli PM candidate Barak. Firm says that its international work was targeted, but it is uncertain whether files on Barak were among those stolen. (MM, WP 1/13; YA 1/13 in WNC 1/14; WJW 1/14; MM 1/20)

Israeli Religious Affairs M Eli Sussa cuts the size of local religious councils to keep them all Orthodox. A recent High Court ruling ordered the powerful councils (which run marriage bureaus and burial societies, maintain synagogues and ritual baths, supervise kosher inspections for both religious and secular Jews) to be expanded to include Reform, Conservative Jews. (WT 1/13)

IDF lifts closure on Hebron imposed 1/4. (MM 1/14, MEI 1/15)

Unidentified assailant stabs, wounds Palestinian in West Jerusalem. (MM 1/12; PR 1/15, JP 1/22)

IDF uproots Palestinian orchard nr. Jewish settlement in the West Bank. (AFP [Internet] 1/12)

In Cairo, FM of Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen hold 2d mtg. to prepare agenda for 1/24 Arab League mtg. on Iraq. Jordan does not condemn mtg. but is upset at not being included, blames Syria, warns that “forming axes” only deepens Arab divisions. (MM 1/12; MENA, RE 1/12 in WNC 1/13; MM 1/13; al-Dustur, MENA 1/13 in WNC 1/14; MM 1/14; JT, MENA 1/14 in WNC 1/16; MM 1/15) (see 1/3)

The U.S. secretly sends letters to Arab states urging them to support its position on Iraq at the 1/24 Arab League mtg. (MM 1/22)

U.S. planes fire on Iraqi missile battery in n. no-fly zone. Defense Dept. says that Iraq has sent planes into the no-fly zones 66 times in the past 2 wks., targeted U.S. and British planes 12 times, increased its number of missile sites fr. 9 to 17. (CSM, NYT, WP, WT 1/13)

13 JANUARY

PC gives Arafat 2 wks. to press charges or release Palestinian political prisoners being held in PA jails without trial, demands halt to political detention. (LAW 1/13; MEI 1/29)

Israeli, U.S. sources confirm that the only materials stolen fr. Greenberg Quinlan Research related to Barak’s campaign for PM. Files, a laptop computer containing information on Barak, computer backup tapes fr. a safe were taken, suggesting the burglars knew exactly what they wanted. Israeli government spokesman David Bar-Ilan warns that anyone casting blame on Netanyahu, the Likud could be subject to legal action. (NYT, WP, WT 1/14; MM 1/20; JP 1/22) (see 1/12)

At the UNSC, U.S. VP Al Gore recommends lifting the ceiling on how much oil Iraq can sell, streamlining approval of purchases under Oil-for-Food program, but not removing sanctions altogether, as China, France, Russia wish. France recommends preventive (not intrusive) weapons monitoring that would replace or significantly change UNSCOM; an end to restrictions on Iraqi oil sales; a program of strict economic, financial controls to make sure oil revenues are not used for military purchases. (NYT, WP, WT 1/14; MM 1/15, 1/22)

U.S. planes fire on 5 Iraqi missile batteries in n. Iraq in 3d straight day of confrontations. (NYT 1/14)

Palestinians fr. Kafr Salaf, Azzun block armed settlers with bulldozers fr. leveling
their village land (in area C) to expand nearby settlements. The IDF intervenes to remove the settlers. (AFP [Internet] 1/13)

14 JANUARY

King Hussein meets with British PM Blair in London, says that he will return to Jordan on 1/19. (JTV 1/14 in WNC 1/20)

Israeli DM Mordechay, PA negotiator Abbas discuss keeping security contacts open despite the freeze in the peace process. (AFP [Internet] 1/16)

An Israeli border policeman working undercover is killed, another is injured, 1 Palestinian is wounded in a shootout nr. Hebron. (MM 1/14; WP 1/15; JP 1/22)

U.S. attacks 2 more Iraqi missile batteries in the n. no-fly zone as daily challenges continue. (WP 1/15) (see 1/13)

15 JANUARY

The U.S. names 7 of an estimated 90 Iraqi opposition groups [Iraqi National Accord, Iraqi National Congress, Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdistan Democratic Party, the London-based Movement for Constitutional Monarchy, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Iran-based Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)] as the groups eligible to receive the $97 m. in assistance under the 10/31 Iraq Liberation Act (ILA). (WP 1/16; MM 1/21, 1/22; WT 1/26)

16 JANUARY

Egyptian FM Musa speaks with FM’s of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria regarding 1/24 Arab League mtg. on Iraq. (MENA 1/16 in WNC 1/20)

Italy allows PKK leader Ocalan to leave for an undisclosed location to seek asylum. Italy has been under diplomatic pressure from the U.S., economic pressure from Turkey to turn Ocalan over to Ankara. (NYT 1/17, 2/19) (see 11/20)

17 JANUARY

PA accepts U.S. proposal to attend talks in Washington next mo. to try to salvage the Wye agmt. Israel has yet to respond to the invitation. (WP, WT 1/18)

Ramadan ends. Arafat releases 37 Palestinian political prisoners fr. PA jails. Israel says releases prove that the PA continues its “revolving door” policy of freeing “Hamas terrorists,” claims that 5 of those released killed Americans. (WP, WT 1/18; MEI, Prime Minister’s Report 1/29)

Just as Id in-Fitr celebrations begin, Israeli police enter the Arab town of Tira, Israel, to arrest suspected car thieves, prompting clash with Israeli Arab youths. 6 policemen, 6 Palestinians are injured. (AFP [Internet] 1/18)

18 JANUARY

The U.S.-Israeli-PA anti-incitement comm. presents its 1st report to the PISMC as required by Wye. (Israeli FMin. press release 1/18)

19 JANUARY

10,000s of Jordanians turn out to welcome King Hussein on his return to Jordan after 6 mos. of cancer treatment in the U.S. The king promises a “comprehensive review” of Jordan’s course, hinting at change in succession. Arafat, leaders of Yemen, Qatar greet King Hussein at the airport.

Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the U.S. send congratulations. Israel also provides fighter escort to the king’s plane on its flight over Israel. (JT, JTV, Petra-JNA, R), SATN 1/19 in WNC 1/20; CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/20; AFP, JTV 1/20 in WNC 1/21; JTV 1/25 in WNC 1/27; MEI 1/29; al-Dustur 1/30 in WNC 2/2) (see 1/8)

Burglars break in to Greenberg Quinlan Research for 2d time, disabling a new sophisticated security system, stealing more sensitive material related to the Barak campaign. Barak advisers, who refused to speculate on the 1st robbery, this time directly blame the “Committee to Re-elect Netanyahu.” Advisers also report that over the last 4 mos., homes of at least 7 Barak staff members have been burglarized, but nothing stolen. Netanyahu says break-ins were staged to “spread clouds of false accusations against the Likud.” (MM, NYT, WP 1/20; CSM, MM, NYT, WJW, WP 1/21; WP 1/23; YA 1/29 in WNC 2/1; WJW 2/4) (see 1/13)

20 JANUARY

4 mos. before elections, PM Netanyahu appoints right-wing Likud lawmaker Shaul Amor to his cabinet as minister without portfolio to deal with social issues. (MM 1/20; NYT 1/21)

King Hussein’s eldest son, Prince Abdallah, replaces Crown Prince Hassan in a mtg. with Gulf heirs, increasing speculation that King Hussein intends to remove
Hassan as crown prince. (MM 1/19; AFP 1/20 in WNC 1/22; MM 1/21) (see 1/19)

21 JANUARY

U.S. appoints career diplomat Frank Ricciardone as "special representative for transition in Iraq" to coordinate the opposition to Saddam Hussein as mandated under the IIA. U.S. says it is prepared to contain Hussein with missiles, sanctions for yrs., while it tries to win acceptance for surrogate Iraqi exile armies that might eventually be able to overthrow the regime; will solicit cooperation fr. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, possibly Iran to host exile armies. Turkey says it hopes Ricciardone will not operate fr. Ankara. (MM 1/21; WP, WT 1/22; HUR 1/22, Sabah 1/25 in WNC 1/26; WT 1/26; WP 1/29; MM 2/1; CSM 2/16) (see 1/15)

22 JANUARY

King Hussein removes his brother Prince Hassan as crown prince, says one of his sons (most likely Abdallah, his eldest by a previous marriage, or Hamza, his eldest by Queen Nur) will be designated regent soon. The king's letter of dismissal to Hassan, who was crown prince for 34 yrs., accuses him of meddling in army matters, settling personal scores by forcing soldiers to retire, changing ambassadorial staff, demanding to choose his own crown prince after his ascension rather than having a family council decide, as Hussein wants. King also meets with PM Tarawnah to reiterate his confidence in his government. (al-Hayat 1/22; al-Ithihad 1/22, JT, RJ 1/23 in WNC 1/26; NYT, WP, WT 1/23; NYT, WT 1/24; MA, YA 1/24 in WNC 1/26; JTV, Petra-JNA 1/25, 1/26 in WNC 1/27; JP, MEI 1/29) (see 1/20; Docs. B4, B5)

PA releases Islamic Jihad leader Shami. (WT 1/23) (see 12/13)

23 JANUARY

In Sharm al-Shaykh, Arafat briefs Pres. Mubarak on continued Israeli refusal to implement Wye agmt., ongoing settlement construction; discusses regional developments. (MENA 1/23 in WNC 1/26)

PM Netanyahu dismisses popular DM Mordechai before he has a chance to resign to join a new centrist party with Netanyahu challengers Shahak, Meridor. Netanyahu 1st asks FM Sharon to take DMin. portfolio until the 5/17 elections, but Sharon declines. He then asks another challenger, Arens, to take the post. Arens says that he will decide after the Likud party primaries 1/26, which he is expected to lose. (NYT, WP, WT 1/24; MA 1/24, 1/25 in WNC 1/26; CSM 1/25; al-Bath 1/25, Tishrin 1/26 in WNC 1/29; JP, MEI, PR 1/29) (see 1/11)

For 1st time in a wk., U.S. planes attack 2 Iraqi antismissile sites after encountering antiaircraft fire. (NYT, WP, WT 1/24; MENA 1/25 in WNC 1/26) (see 1/14)

1 SLA mbr. is injured during a clash with Hizballah in s. Lebanon. (VOL 1/23 in WNC 1/26)

24 JANUARY

Israel declines U.S. invitation to hold tri-lateral mtg. with the PA in Washington in 2/99 to discuss Wye implementation. Israeli FM Sharon says time is not right. (YA 1/25 in WNC 1/26) (see 1/17)

Ousted DM Mordechai joins the new Shahak-Meridor party. Netanyahu terms Mordechai "immoral" for consorting with centrists. (NYT, WP, WT 1/25; MA 1/25 in WNC 1/26) (see 1/23)

Israelis of Rumanian origin establish new political party, the Progressive Center Party. 14 requests to form new parties have been submitted since the last Knesset elections. Only 3 have been approved. (MA 1/25 in WNC 1/26)

Arab League mtg. on Iraq convenes in Cairo. Iraq attends but walks out in protest of what it calls a biased final statement that could give the U.S. a pretext to launch more airstrikes. The statement expresses "deep concern" over, but does not denounce, 12/98 U.S.-led attack; insists Iraq recognize Kuwait, comply with UN resolutions as a prelude to sanctions relief. Participants agree to set up ministerial comm. to work toward lifting economic sanctions on Iraq in accordance with a specific UN compliance timetable. (WP 1/24; AFP, MENA, RE 1/24, al-Ayyam, al-Dustur, MENA, SANA 1/25 in WNC 1/26; MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/25; MENA, al-Quds al-Arabi 1/25, al-Safir 1/26 in WNC 1/27; MM, WT 1/26; MENA 1/28 in WNC 1/29; MEI 1/29)

48 Hamas, Islamic Jihad prisoners in the PA's Nablus, Jericho, al-Jenid jail begin hunger strike to protest the PA's failure to adhere to the PC's 1/13 call to free political prisoners held without charge at the end of Ramadan. (LAW, MEI, PR 1/29) (see 1/17)

Jewish settlers bulldoze Palestinian land nr. Bethlehem, including property of a historic monastery, to expand Efrat settlement. (INFOPAL 1/25)
U.S. planes attack 2 more Iraqi missile sites in the n. no-fly zone. (NYT, WP 1/25)

25 JANUARY

King Hussein designates Prince Abdallah as heir to the throne. (JT 1/25 in WNC 1/26; JTV, Petra-JNA 1/25, 1/26 in WNC 1/27; NYT, WP, WT 1/26; Petra-JNA, RJ 1/26, RJ 1/27 in WNC 1/28; NYT 1/27; MEL, PR 1/29; al-Dustur 1/30 in WNC 2/2; CSM 2/2, WT 2/3; WJW 2/4) (see 1/22)

PM Netanyahu wins Likud primary over Arens. (Netanyahu takes more than 75% of the votes, but only 30% of Likud mbrs. participate.) Fmr. DM Mordechai announces that he will challenge Netanyahu for the premiership as leader of an emerging centrist party that includes fmr. IDF chief of staff Shahak, fmr. Finance M Meridor, fmr. Tel Aviv mayor Roni Milo. Shahid, Meridor drop their bids for PM. (MM 1/25; CSM, WP. WT 1/26; CSM, WP 1/28, 2/4) (see 1/24)

Britain says that it is not party to U.S. attempts to overthrow Iraqi pres. Saddam Hussein, it will not assist the Iraqi opposition militarily. (MENA 1/25 in WNC 1/26) (see 1/21)

U.S. planes strike antimissile batteries in n., s. no-fly zones for 3d straight day. In Basra, 1 or more U.S. missiles goes astray, killing 11 Iraqi civilians, wounding 59. The U.S. recently expanded its strikes to include security infrastructure as well as missile batteries, radar stations; says that containing Saddam Hussein through low-visibility, sustained, reactive bombing is the only military action politically acceptable to Arab states. (CSM, NYT, WP, WT 1/26; MENA 1/26 in WNC 1/27; JT 1/28 in WNC 1/29; MBI 1/29; NYT, WP 2/3; WP 2/13) (see 1/21)

SLA releases 16 detainees fr. al-Khiyam prison for humanitarian reasons. (VOL 1/25 in WNC 1/26)

IDF drops airborne commando unit into Wadi al-Hujayr in s. Lebanon to set up an ambush on road btwn. al-Ghanduriyya and Burj Qalawayh. Results in 4-hr. combat with Hizballah, including IDF air support. IDF allegedly aborts 2d drop. (RL 1/25 in WNC 1/26)

26 JANUARY

King Hussein swears in Crown Prince Abdallah as regent, leaves for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, with a relapse of cancer. Crown Prince Abdallah visits his uncle, Prince Hassan, to thank him for his service to the country over the past 30 yrs. (JTV, Petra-JNA 1/26 in WNC 1/27; JTV, Petra-JNA 1/26, AFP, JTV, MA, Petra-JNA, RJ, YA 1/27 in WNC 1/28; CSM, MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/27; MM, WJW, WP, WT 1/28; JT 2/4 in WNC 2/5)

Kuwaiti FM Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah makes his 1st visit to Jordan since 1990 to congratulate King Hussein on his return fr. the U.S. (SA 1/26 in WNC 1/27) (see 1/5)

The Knesset passes (52-30) a law requiring a national referendum and a special parliamentary majority (61 of 120 MKs) to cede land in the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem. (MM, NYT, WP 1/27; Tishrin 1/27 in WNC 2/2; NYT 1/28)

Attempting to bypass a recent High Court ruling, the Knesset passes (50-49) a bill to bar non-Orthodox Jews fr. the country's powerful religious councils. PM candidate Mordechai casts the deciding vote. (NYT 1/27; WJW 2/4) (see 1/12)

Arens accepts PM Netanyahu's offer to become DM. (MM, NYT, WP 1/27; al-Ba'th 1/27 in WNC 2/1; MM 1/28; MA 1/29 in WNC 2/2) (see 1/23)

150 IDF soldiers, police open fire on 100 Palestinians blocking demolition of 2 Palestinian homes in Issawiyya in East Jerusalem, wounding 6. Both houses in Issawiyya, a 3d house in the Old City are destroyed. (LAW, WT 1/27)

27 JANUARY

U.S. Secy. of State Albright flies to Egypt, Saudi Arabia to ask their assistance in implementing the U.S.'s policy of "containment plus regime change" toward Iraq. U.S. says that Middle East leaders have been "sympathetic" to its ideas but have not endorsed the plan, offered to aid in the effort. (MENA 1/27 in WNC 1/28; MM, NYT, WP, WT 1/28; WP, WT 1/29) (see 1/21)

Outside the PC mtg. in Ramallah, Palestinians demonstrate for the release of Palestinian political prisoners held in PA jails. (LAW 1/29)

28 JANUARY

PM Netanyahu creates a U.S.-style National Security Council to coordinate military, intelligence, civilian geopolitical strategy; appoints fmr. gen., defense establishment veteran David Ivri as head. (IDF Radio 1/28 in WNC 1/29; NYT, WT 1/29; MM 2/2; JP 2/5, 2/12)
U.S. Secy. of State Albright flies to Amman to congratulate Jordan’s new crown prince, Abdallah; asks Jordan to aid in overthrowing Iraq’s Saddam Hussein. (MM 1/28; RJ 1/28 in WNC 1/29; NYT, WP, WT 1/29; WT 2/3; RJ 2/3 in WNC 2/5; JP 2/5) (see 1/27)

Testifying before Congress, Gen. Anthony Zinni, cmdr. of U.S. forces in the Gulf, warns that the U.S.’s new policy of supporting Iraqi opposition groups in hopes that they will overthrow Saddam Hussein could be “very dangerous” if handled improperly. (MM, NYT 1/29; WT 1/30; MM 2/1, 2/5; see also WP, WT 10/22/98)

The Israeli daily Yediot Aharanot claims that the Israeli Health Min. is keeping a specimen of the lethal variola virus despite a World Health Organization ruling in the late 1970s to destroy all specimens, vaccinations in light of the disease’s global eradication. Health Min. says only that “no work is being done with the variola virus” in its laboratories. (YA 1/28 in WNC 1/29)

IDF demolishes a Palestinian home in East Jerusalem. (LAW 2/1)

29 JANUARY

In a plea agmt., Cyprus drops charges of spying against 2 Mossad agents in exchange for their admissions to possessing banned listening equipment, approaching a restricted military zone; sentences them to 3-yr. prison terms. (NYT 1/30; NYT, WP, WT 2/2; MA 2/2 in WNC 2/4; JP 2/5, 2/12) (see 11/24)

In Amman, Arab interior ministers open 3-day mtg. on combatting terrorism, extradition of wanted persons, combatting drugs. (RJ 1/29 in WNC 2/1; RJ 1/29, JT; RJ 1/30, al-Awsaq, JTV 1/31 in WNC 2/2)

IDF Chief of Staff Mufaz rebukes 100 reserve pilots who are refusing to fly until the DMin. grants them the same life insurance coverage as career officers. (NYT 1/30)

In London, U.S. special rep. Ricciardone meets with Iraqi opposition groups, including some declared eligible to receive aid under the ILA. (MM 2/1) (see 1/28)

In ‘Ayn al-Hilwa refugee camp in s. Lebanon, a Palestinian, Ahmad al-Awali, opens fire on anti-Arafat PLO Col. Munir Makdah, without hitting him. Awali is arrested for attempted assassination. Makdah blames the IDF. (VOL 1/29 in WNC 2/2)

30 JANUARY

Arafat goes to Amman to meet with newly designated Crown Prince Abdallah. (RJ 1/30 in WNC 2/2; NYT 1/31; WT 2/3)

IDF reserve pilots’ strike ends after sides reach agmt. on insurance. (MA 1/31 in WNC 2/2) (see 1/29)

U.S. Asst. Secy. of State Indyk, special rep. Ricciardone meet with emirs of Bahrain, Qatar on 1st leg of Gulf tour to rally support for U.S. policy of overthrowing Iraqi pres. Saddam Hussein. Bahrain is currently a nonpermanent mbr. of the UNSC. (WT 1/31; MM 2/1) (see 1/29)

UN agrees to create 3 panels to review all aspects of Iraq’s relations with the UN as the 1st step toward devising a new policy toward Iraq. (NYT, WP 1/31; WP, WT 2/1; ATL 2/3 in WNC 2/4)

In the largest attack since Operation Desert Fox, U.S. planes attack 6 Iraqi air defense sites in the n. no-fly zone. (WP, WT 1/31)

31 JANUARY

In Davos, Switzerland, Arafat, Mubarak discuss Israel’s failure to implement Wye, construction of settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes, confiscation of Palestinian Jerusalem ID cards. (RE 1/31 in WNC 2/2)

Jewish settlers set up 3 mobile homes on Palestinian land nr. Elon Moreh settlement. IDF declares area a closed military zone off-limits to civilians but does not remove settlers. (AFP [Internet] 2/2)

U.S. Asst. Secy. of State Indyk, special rep. Ricciardone stop in Kuwait on 2d leg of their Gulf tour. (MM 2/1) (see 1/30)

Syria amends officers’ service law to raise mandatory retirement age fr. 67 to 70 yrs. Chief of Staff Ali Aslan, DM and Dep. Chief of Staff Mustafa Talas are the only ones affected. (al-Nahar 2/1 in WNC 2/8)

1 FEBRUARY

146 Israeli writers, artists, intellectuals issue appeal in support of a Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. (MM, NYT 2/2; PR 2/5) (see Doc. C4)

At the Western Wall, 100 Orthodox yeshiva students surround group of 33 American Reform rabbis, calling them “nothing but biological Jews,” saying they should “go back to Germany” to be exterminated. (CSM, NYT 2/2) (see 1/26)
In Rafah, 1 PSF officer is killed in shootout with 3 wanted Hamas mbrs. he was surveilling. The fugitives escape in a car, hitting Palestinian boy and girl, who later die of their injuries. The 3 are arrested hrs. later in Shati refugee camp. (WT 2/2, 2/5)

U.S. Asst. Secy. of State Indyk, special rep. Ricciardone stop in Oman, UAE on last leg of their Gulf tour. Indyk claims Gulf states “broadly support” the U.S. position on Iraq. (MM 2/1, 2/3, 2/4) (see 1/31)

2 FEBRUARY

King Hussein undergoes bone marrow transplant at Mayo Clinic. (MM 2/2; JTV 2/2 in WNC 2/4; NYT, WP, WT 2/3)

On a television talk show, PM Netanyahu compares Labor campaign rival Barak to Hitler. The audience, stacked with Likud supporters sent by the PM’s Office, applauds Netanyahu’s statements; insults, slaps on Labor party mbrs. in the audience. (MM 2/2; MM, WT 2/3; MA 2/3 in WNC 2/4; MM 2/4; JP 2/12)

U.S. planes destroy 2 of 3 new antiship missile sites in s. Iraq. Pentagon says that U.S., British jets have attacked more antiaircraft, missile batteries than they did during the 12/16-19 operation. (NYT, WP 2/3)

3 FEBRUARY

Arafat meets with Secy. Albright. In press conference afterward, he says that he cannot discuss the issue of declaring a Palestinian state. (MM, NYT, WT 2/4)

U.S. denounces Israeli media campaign begun 1/17 to portray Arafat as coddling “terrorists” by claiming that he released Palestinian prisoners who killed Americans. U.S. says Israel’s claims are baseless; thinks media campaign is an attempt to detract fr. Arafat’s visit to Washington and fr. the positive publicity Arafat earned during Clinton’s 12/14 trip to Gaza. (al-Quds 2/3 in WNC 2/8; WJW, WP 2/4; MM 2/8; JP 2/12)

66 congressmen introduce legislation calling on Pres. Clinton to oppose recognition to any unilaterally declared Palestinian state. (MM 2/8)

Israeli pres. Ezer Weizman reduces the sentences of 8 Israelis convicted of killing or plotting to kill Palestinians and of 5 Palestinians, 2 of whom were convicted of killing Palestinian collaborators. (MM, NYT, WP 2/4; al-Dustur 2/4 in WNC 2/8; WJW 2/11; JP 2/12)

Syrian delegation arrives in Russia for 11 days of talks on military-technical cooperation, acquisition of hardware. (Interfax 2/3 in WNC 2/4; al-Quds al-Arabi 2/3, Interfax, ITAR-TASS 2/5 in WNC 2/8; see also MM 1/26) (see 11/18)

UN says it will no longer allow Americans, Britons to work in its humanitarian program in Iraq because Baghdad refuses to ensure their safety. (NYT, WP, WT 2/4)

4 FEBRUARY

King Hussein leaves the U.S. for Jordan in critical condition, with no further hope for treatment of his cancer. (AFP, JTV, RJ 2/4 in WNC 2/5; MM, NYT, WP, WT 2/5; NYT 2/6)

Pres. Clinton, Arafat meet on sidelines of Washington prayer breakfast despite protests fr. the Christian Right, boycott of breakfast by some congressmen, Christian groups. Clinton warns Arafat against declaring a state in 5/99, urges him to do more to ease Israeli safety concerns. (MM, NYT, WP, WT 2/5; JP, PR 2/12)

PA arrests 40 Palestinians on charges of planning attacks against Jewish settlers in Gaza for Hamas’s military wing. (NYT, WT 2/5; JP 2/12)

IDF demolishes 2 Palestinian homes nr. Hebron. (Christian Peace Team press release 2/6)

UNSCOM head Butler says that he will not seek another term as chmn. when his contract expires in 6/99 but refuses to resign. (NYT, WP, WT 2/5) (see 1/6)

5 FEBRUARY

King Hussein lands in Jordan, is transported to a hospital, reportedly in a coma. The family decides to keep him on life support. (NYT, WP, WT 2/5; JTV, RMC 2/5, SA 2/6 in WNC 2/8)

6 FEBRUARY

Jordan’s cabinet declares King Hussein incapacitated, transfers authority to Crown Prince Abdallah. U.S. Arab states pledge political, financial support for the new leader to ensure a smooth transition. Pres. Clinton says U.S. will accelerate transfer of $500 m. promised after Wye. UAE transfers $250 m. to Jordanian banks to shore up the dinar. (IRNA, JTV, MENA, Petra-JNA, RJ, SATN 2/6, MA, SA 2/7 in WNC 2/8; NYT, WP, WT 2/7)

3,000 Palestinians march to the PA headquarters in Hebron protesting “PA-sub-
servicence to Israel and the CIA," demanding release of political prisoners held in PA jails. (MEI 2/12)

7 FEBRUARY

King Hussein dies. Crown Prince Abdallah is sworn in as King Abdallah II, appoints his half-brother Hamza as crown prince. Jordan declares a wk. of mourning. Syria, Egypt announce official 3-day mourning period. Syria also postpones 2/8 presidential elections. (IDF Radio, Interfax, IRNA, JTV, RJ, RL, VIRI 2/7 in WNC 2/8; AFP, Xinhua 2/7 in WNC 2/9; GIU, CSM, NYT, WP, WT 2/8; MA, SA 2/8 in WNC 2/9; CSM 2/9, WJW 2/11; JP, MEI, PR 2/12)

8 FEBRUARY

Funeral for King Hussein is held in Amman. 10s of world leaders attend, including large Israeli, U.S. delegations. On the sidelines, Clinton meets briefly with King Abdallah, Asad, Arafat, Netanyahu. Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) head Nayif Hawatmah shakes hands with Israeli pres. Weizman. (MM 2/8; ATL, Interfax, ITAR-TASS, Kyodo, LPA, Wei- ner Zeitung 2/8 in WNC 2/9; MM, NYT, WP, WT 2/9; MM 2/10) (see Peace Monitor)

9 FEBRUARY

UN General Assembly passes a non-binding resolution calling for an international conference of the signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention to examine Israel's "persistent violations" of the convention by building settlements. (WT 2/10; MM 2/11; al-Quds 2/12 in WNC 2/17; WJW 2/18) (see Peace Monitor)

PM Netanyahu wins the Likud primaries. FM Sharon, who hoped to capture the 2d spot on the party ticket, finishes 8th. Science M Silvan Shalom comes in 2d. (MM 2/9; NYT 2/10)

Jewish settlers move into fmr. IDF outpost in Nimrod, Golan Heights, hoping to start a new settlement there. IDF confirms land was transferred to civilian use. (MM 2/9; WP 2/10)

10 FEBRUARY

Syrian pres. Assad is reelected to a 5th 7-yr. term. As the only candidate, he wins 99.98% of the vote. (MM 2/10; SANA, SATN 2/10 in WNC 2/12; NYT 2/11; MEI 2/16)

Egypt reports that it arrested, deported 379 Israelis in 1998. (al-Akhbar 2/11 in WNC 2/18)

Bahrain, host to the U.S. 5th Fleet headquarters, says it is opposed to military attacks on Iraq, will not allow its territory to be used as staging ground to oust Saddam Hussein. (WP 2/11)

11 FEBRUARY

As the nearly daily series of challenges and strikes continues, U.S. planes hit 7 sites in the Iraqi no-fly zones. Iraq claims 2 civilians are killed, several wounded. (NYT, WP 2/11) (see 2/3)

12 FEBRUARY

After a 5 wk. trial, the Senate, voting along party lines, acquits Pres. Clinton on both articles of impeachment (45-55; 50-50). (NYT, WP, WT 2/13)

Arafat resurfaces idea of Palestinian confederation with Jordan in a final peace arrangement. (NYT, WP, WT 2/13; Ukezz 2/13 in WNC 2/17; al-Ayyam 2/13, al-Hayat al-fadida 2/14 in WNC 2/18) (see Peace Monitor)

200 Palestinian protesters storm PA jail in Jericho, demanding release of 5 Islamists held there without charge. The 5 are among the 48 political prisoners who have been on hunger strike since 1/24. Protesters scuffle with PA police but eventually leave the building peacefully. In Nablus, 1,000 Palestinians hold rally in solidarity with prisoners. (WP 2/13; MEI 2/26)

In keeping with its 1/30 decision, the UN creates a panel to review Iraq's disarmament record, recommend ways of ensuring that Iraq fulfills agmt. to abandon unconventional weapons. 20-mbr. panel contains 12 UNSCOM mbrs., including the ranking American UNSCOM inspector but not chmn. Butler UN also creates 2 other panels on humanitarian affairs, prisoners of war and Kuwaiti property. (NYT 2/13)

13 FEBRUARY

PA police arrest Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zahhar on charges of harboring a suspect in the murder of a PA policeman earlier this mo. (WT 2/14)

14 FEBRUARY

In Jerusalem, 250,000 Ultra-Orthodox Jews hold protest rally against High Court, saying recent decisions that erode special privileges held by Ultra-Orthodox violate Jewish law. 50,000 secular Jews hold counterdemonstration. (MM, NYT, WP, WT
2/15; MM 2/16; W JW 2/18; JP 2/19) (see 1/26)

Jordan’s King Abdullah asks the cabinet to stay on, continue policies laid out by King Hussein. The new king may call for the cabinet to resign after he completes consultations with advisers, politicians on the country’s economic, political policies. (WP 2/15)

Iraq orders Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey to rescind permission for the U.S., Britain to use their bases to patrol the Iraqi no-fly zones or face possible retaliation. (NYT, WP 2/15; NYT, WP, WT 2/16)

15 FEBRUARY

Arafat appoints PC comm. to study file of each political prisoner held in PA jails, recommend which prisoners should be released. (MEI 2/26) (see Peace Monitor)

Labor holds party primaries. By common consent, Barak is given slot for PM candi-

date, fmr. PM Shimon Peres is given 2d slot. Top vote getters are Shlomo Ben-Ami, a Sephardim; Yossi Beilin, an architect of the Oslo agreements; fmr. dep. chief of staff Matan Vilnai, and Avraham Burg, chmn. of the Jewish Agency. (MM, WT 2/16)

DFLP leader Hawatmah is thrown out of the Damascus-based coalition of Palestinian rejectionist groups for shaking hands with Israeli pres. Weizman at King Hussein’s funeral 2/8. (NYT, WP 2/16)

In Nablus, 3,500 Fatah supporters hold rally to mark Fatah’s 24th anniversary. (AFP [Internet] 2/15)

IDF demolishes 3 Palestinian homes under construction nr. Nablus, bringing to 21 the number of homes demolished since the Wye agmt. was signed 10/23. (MEI 2/26)

2 Lebanese civilians are wounded by IDF shelling in S. Lebanon. (RL 2/16 in WNC 2/17)

Chronology Source Abbreviations

A FP (Agence France-Presse, Paris)
ATL (Anatolia, Ankara)
CS M (Christian Science Monitor, Boston)
GIU (Global Intelligence Update, Austin)
HA (Ha’aretz, Tel Aviv)
HUR (Hurriyet, Istanbul)
IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency, Tehran)
ITV (Israel Television Network, Jerusalem)
JT (Jordan Times, Amman)
J TV (Jordan Television Network, Amman)
LAW (Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, Jerusalem)
LPA (London Press Association, London)
MA (Ma’ariv, Tel Aviv)
MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Centre, London)
MEI (Middle East International, London)
MENA (Middle East News Agency, Cairo)
MM (Mideast Mirror, London)
NYT (New York Times, New York)
PR (Palestine Report, Jerusalem)
QY (Qol Yisra’el Radio, Tel Aviv)
R E (Republic of Egypt Radio, Cairo)
RJ (Radio Jordan, Amman)
RL (Radio Lebanon, Beirut)
RMC (Radio Monte Carlo, Paris)
SA (al-Sharq al-Awsat, London)
SANA (Syrian Arab News Agency, Damascus)
SATN (Syrian Arab Television Network, Damascus)
VIRI (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran)
VOA (Voice of the Arabs, Cairo)
VOL (Voice of Lebanon, Beirut)
W JW (Washington Jewish Week, Rockville, MD)
WNC (World News Connection [Internet], Washington, DC)
WP (Washington Post, Washington, DC)
WT (Washington Times, Washington, DC)
YA (Yedi'ot Aharonot, Tel Aviv)

Chronology compiled by Michele L. Kjorlien

Jordanian officers carry the coffin of King Hussein through the Raghadan palace compound on 8 February, during his funeral procession. (AFP/Patrick Baz)