

# Jerusalem Chronology

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## 1 February 2000- 30 April 2000

### 2 February

The Palestinian Central Council of the PLO announces that an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital will be declared this year. The Council stresses that the Israeli withdrawal must include all Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, beyond the 4 June 1967 borders in implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242. (AQ)

*Ha'aretz* reports that the Regional Committee for Planning and Zoning in Jerusalem has ratified a project to erect a 130-meter tower over Jabal al-Mukaber overlooking occupied Jerusalem from the southern wing. The Israeli Ministry of Tourism foresees that the site will be one of the most popular tourist destinations in Jerusalem because of its altitude and viewing location. (AYM)

### 6 February

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy says that Israel will not withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders and will not accept the partition of Jerusalem. (AQ)

Members of the Israeli Knesset attempt to visit the alleged future site of a Palestinian Parliament in the Palestinian town of Abu Dis, just outside the Israeli municipal borders of Jerusalem. They are barred by a member of the Palestinian Authority, Salah Badar, on grounds that they do not have permission to be there. One Israel Knesset member (MK) Ofir Pines-Paz affirms that the town is not part of Jerusalem and should not be incorporated within its borders in any future peace settlement. Likud MK Reuven Rivlin says that just because most of Abu Dis is located in Zone B does not mean Israel gave up its sovereignty

over the town, which is part of Jerusalem. Palestinian Minister of State Ziyad Abu Zayyar responds to these statements by affirming that "Abu Dis is Palestinian property, part of the occupied territory. We refuse to see it as a substitute for Jerusalem." (AQ, HA, VOP)

### 8 February

Israeli authorities and the Jerusalem Municipality confiscate new lands located in the area between al-Tour and Z'ayyem, east of the city. The confiscation is part of an Israeli project to connect Ma'ale Adumim and al-Kharrat al-Ahmar settlements and other settlements surrounding the city through a bypass road and a tunnel passing through Mt. Scopus under the Hebrew University campus. (AQ)

Palestinians from Abu Dis prevent Israeli Housing and Construction Minister Yitzhak Levy and members of his right-wing National Religious Party from entering the town. Finally, Israeli border police manage to gain access to the village for the MKs. Under heavy guard they pass through the town, abandoning plans to visit the supposed future PNA parliament building, but stopping instead at the area on which the Jerusalem Municipality plans to build a Jewish settlement on 70 dunums (280 acres) with financial assistance from Irving Moskowitz, the American sponsor of the Jewish settlement compound in Ras al-Amud. (HA)

### 9 February

The PLO Negotiations Department reveals that the number of settlement tenders since Barak took office reached 4,112. The Department says that in addition to the tenders, there are 2,700 housing units under construction in Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem and 132 units in a settlement in Ras al-Amud. (AQ)

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat reiterates that the PNA rejects any alternative to Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. He emphasizes that al-Ram, Abu Dis, and

Ezariyyeh are in Zone B areas that should be transferred to full control of the PNA and that Jerusalem means the Old City and al-Aqsa Mosque and all suburbs occupied in 1967. (AQ)

#### 14 February

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat delivers a speech at the opening session of the "al-Quds Bayt al-Maal 2000" meetings sponsored by the Jerusalem Committee under the presidency of King Muhammad VI of Morocco. The meetings are also attended by the finance ministers of sixteen Arab and Islamic countries. The participants meet to discuss projects costing \$42 million. This year Morocco has donated \$3 million to the fund and Egypt \$1 million. (AQ)

#### 15 February

The PLO and the Vatican sign an agreement that establishes a formal protocol for relations between the Catholic Church and the PNA in the Palestinian territories. The agreement also calls for a just solution to the issue of Jerusalem and a special status for the city, based on international guarantees, to ensure religious freedom and protect the rights of the three monotheistic religions. The protocol also states that the "Vatican rejects any unilateral measures taken by Israel in Jerusalem." (AYM)

The Israeli Foreign Ministry lodges a formal protest with the head of the Apostolic Delegation in Israel against the PLO-Vatican agreement on the grounds that it questions Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem. They also say that the issue of Jerusalem is one of the issues that must be solved in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian talks on the final settlement and that the PLO-Vatican statements constitute interference in these negotiations. (AYM)

#### 19 February

Prof. Walid Khalidi, the general secretary of the

Institute for Palestine Studies, testifies at a briefing on Capitol Hill sponsored by the American Committee on Jerusalem regarding the Jerusalem Embassy Act passed by Congress in 1995 mandating the relocation of the embassy to Jerusalem. Presenting the findings of a three-year investigation, Prof. Khalidi reveals that the land slated for the relocation is not owned by Israel but is private property owned by Palestinians and Islamic *waqf* property that was rented by the British government up until it left in May 1948. (AQ)

#### 21 February

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy pressures the President of the European Union (EU) Parliament Nicole Fontaine to cancel a meeting at the French Consulate in East Jerusalem with Faisal Husseini, PLO Executive Committee member and PLO official responsible for Jerusalem Affairs. Husseini charges her with backing down from the official EU position regarding Jerusalem. (JMCC)

#### 22 February

President Yasser Arafat holds talks with the President of the EU Parliament Nicole Fontaine. In response to reporters' questions, Fontaine says that the EU has not changed its policy concerning Jerusalem and still considers it an occupied city. Later in the day, thanks to the intervention of French President Jacques Chirac, she meets with Faisal Husseini at St. Anne Church in the Old City. (AQ)

Official Israeli sources say that the Palestinian village of Lifta, depopulated in 1948 and located at the western entrance of Jerusalem, will be transformed into a settlement neighborhood for wealthy Israeli Jews. (HJ)

#### 23 February

Faisal Husseini declares that henceforth, if visiting VIPs meet official Israelis in West Jerusalem, they will be invited to the Orient

House to meet with him. In recent years, Palestinians had conceded to Israeli demands that no diplomatic VIPs meet with PNA representatives at the Orient House. The new position comes in response to Israel's unilateral measures in Jerusalem at Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim) and Ras al-Amud. (HJ, HA)

## 24 February

According to a census by the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality's research and strategic planning department, nearly a quarter of a million people have left Jerusalem in the past eighteen years, driven out by high property prices and low job opportunities. Some 228,000 people have left the city since 1982 and the city has had negative migration since the start of the 1990s. Most of those leaving the city are secular Israelis, but in recent years the number of Haredim leaving the city has risen too and now makes up nearly 20 percent of the leavers. The survey reveals that around 40 percent of those leaving move to the immediate periphery where real estate is far cheaper. (HA)

## 1 March

The PNA announces that it will not meet senior European visitors in PNA territory if they acquiesce to Israeli pressure and refuse meetings with Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The announcement comes in the wake of stepped-up pressure by the Israeli Foreign Ministry on European representatives not to meet with Faisal Hussein and other senior Palestinian officials in Jerusalem. (AYM)

The Israeli Interior Ministry releases an estimate that there are 20,000 "illegally" built structures in East Jerusalem. According to the report submitted by Tzvi Schneider of the Interior Ministry's Building Supervision Department to Minister Haim Raimon, the number of illegal East Jerusalem buildings swelled in 1999, with a new trend of multi-story structures going up, with the encouragement of the PNA. In 1999 the Jerusalem municipality

carried out a small fraction of the demolition orders it issued for illegally constructed buildings. Only 17 out of 141 such orders were carried out. (HA)

Informed sources say that Jewish extremist groups have agreed recently to intensify preparations aiming at re-building the "Temple Mount" for Jews in occupied Jerusalem. The sources say that six groups established this week a special fund called "Otsar Hamakdash" (meaning the treasury of the Temple Mount), and they registered it officially as a Jewish Waqf at the Israeli Justice Ministry. The aim of this fund is to collect donations to erect the Third Temple. (AYM)

## 2 March

The PNA announces that it will oppose a plan by the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) for renewed building in the area of the depopulated Palestinian village of Lifta on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. The ILA is planning to preserve part of the village and build 140 cottages on the rest of the land for a tourist area. The plan will be presented in the next few months to the Jerusalem municipal planning committee for approval. With support from the PNA, the families of Lifta refugees will appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court to halt the plan. Arguing that such action will prejudice the final status negotiations, which encompass properties on both sides of the city, they are gathering the necessary documents to support their property claims. Recently the PNA completed the collection of documents regarding over 6,000 assets it alleges to belong to Palestinians in West Jerusalem. The PNA's action regarding Lifta is the first of a series of campaigns on behalf of Palestinians who claim ownership of properties in West Jerusalem. (HA)

## 7 March

Israeli Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami says that the understanding between Israel and the Palestinians regarding the meetings

between Palestinian officials and official European visitors "will be preserved." Ben-Ami tells Faisal Hussein that Israel will not permit such meetings in Orient House or elsewhere in East Jerusalem. After the meeting, Hussein says that the Palestinians will retain their right to hold their meetings where they choose without undercutting their understandings with Israel. (HA)

### 9 March

In a radio interview Danny Yatom, the prime minister's chief of staff, says that Israel would consider handing over the Palestinian neighborhoods that border Jerusalem either as part of the third redeployment or in the context of a final peace agreement. Responding to a storm of criticism from Likud MKs and right-wing Israeli groups, the Prime Minister's Office states that "there's no intention now of changing the designations of the villages outside Jerusalem within the context of the upcoming withdrawal. Any possible hand-over of territories in the future will be discussed at the appropriate time." Foreign Minister David Levy says that the government is determined to keep Jerusalem united as Israel's capital and under its sovereignty. As to the suburbs outside of the city boundaries, Levy says, "everything in good time, depending on the progress." (AYM, HA)

It is revealed that the Jewish Quarter and Rehabilitation Company has signed a contract with the Haredi group Ezrat Menahem selling to them a large area near the walls and the western entrances of al-Aqsa Mosque and adjacent to the Western Wall/al-Buraq. The transaction was frozen by a temporary injunction requested by the Religious Affairs Ministry. Last year the Jewish Quarter Company sold four Jewish quarter properties to Haredi groups, including one at the Archaeological Garden, which features a twelfth-century Crusader church. The Religious Affairs Ministry and the Barak government plan to review all these

transactions. (AYM, HA)

### 13 March

Israeli Housing Ministry officials say that the office of Barak has frozen settlement expansion plans in regions around occupied East Jerusalem. Israeli *Yediot Ahronot* newspaper quotes the officials as saying that the new policy was implemented at the beginning of this year. (AYM)

### 14 March

Under pressure from right-wing hard-liners and after meeting with Israeli security authorities, Barak decides not to include Anata village near Jerusalem within the 6.1 percent redeployment scheduled as part of the third phase of the second redeployment. (HJ)

### 19 March

The Israeli government votes with a majority of sixteen votes to six with one abstention to approve the 6.1 percent redeployment. The towns to be handed over to full Palestinian control include the villages of Beitunia located twenty kilometers north of Jerusalem and Ubaydiyyeh, in the Bethlehem district and six kilometers south of Jerusalem. The village of Anata, however, which is northeast of Jerusalem adjacent to the Pisgat Ze'ev and Neve Yacov settlements, will remain in Zone C under total Israeli control. (AQ)

Palestinian shopkeepers in the Old City object to the Israeli decision to close down their souvenir shops during the Pope's visit to the Old City, denying them their right to celebrate the visit and to do business. They say that Israeli soldiers are harassing their businesses under the guise of implementing security measures for the Pope's visit. (AYM)

### 20 March

Tens of Jerusalemites go to the Orient House to celebrate Pope John Paul II's arrival in the Holy Land by raising Vatican and Palestinian flags,

setting free doves, and sending aloft a large balloon carrying the Vatican and Palestinian flags. They also initiate a petition drive signed by fifty Christian and Muslim clergy and forty Palestinian public figures from Jerusalem calling on the Pope to issue a statement expressing his support for Palestinian rights in Jerusalem. At the end of the ceremony Israeli police force Palestinian officials to take down the balloon. In response to Israeli protests at the celebration, Orient House officials note that Israel had provoked it by raising Israeli flags in East Jerusalem. (AQ, HA)

*Ha'aretz* reports that Jewish investors are planning to build some 5,000 housing units on land bought from three Arab families of Walajeh village on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. About half the land falls within the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem municipality, while the other half is in Area C of the Palestinian Authority. The PNA had warned villagers not to sell their land, and after learning of the sale, attempted to re-purchase the land from Jewish buyers, but their offer of \$50 million was rejected. (HA)

### **21 March**

Israeli Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert receives the Pope upon his arrival to Jerusalem, saying in Hebrew "welcome to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel," and in English, "welcome to the Holy Land." The Pope goes to his residence at the Apostolic headquarters in the neighborhood of al-Suwaneh in East Jerusalem. (AQ)

### **22 March**

The Pope visits Dheisheh refugee camp and expresses his support for "the natural right of the Palestinian people in establishing a homeland." (AQ, HJ, AYM)

### **23 March**

At an interfaith meeting attended by the Pope, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau thanks

the Pope for his "recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's united eternal capital," although the Vatican has granted no such recognition. Palestinian Deputy Chief of Islamic Courts and Islamic High Council member Sheikh Taysir Tamimi calls for an end to Jewish settlements East Jerusalem, ID confiscations, illegal arrest house demolitions, and to the closure of the city to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians. He notes that no Israeli rabbis have ever protested against these practices. Israeli leaders denounce his speech as "political." The Grand Mufti in Jerusalem, Sheikh Ikramah Sabri, chooses not to attend the interfaith meeting. (AQ, HJ, AYM)

### **26 March**

Pope John Paul II returns to the Vatican. Before leaving, he visits al-Aqsa Mosque, the Wailing Wall/al-Buraq, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At a meeting with the Mufti of Jerusalem, Muslim and Christian Palestinians hand the Pope a document demanding the lifting of the siege imposed on the city and the solving of the refugee issue through recognition of the right of return. (AQ, HJ, AYM)

### **27 March**

Palestinian Authority officials say the Vatican has apparently retreated from its long-standing policy and no longer insists on internationalizing Jerusalem's Old City, as stated in the 1947 UN Resolution 181. According to the PLO Ambassador to the Vatican Afif Safieh, the Vatican would accept a political division of Jerusalem between Israel and the Palestinians as part of a final-status agreement, based on UN resolutions, provided it receives international guarantees that the status quo will be kept. (HA)

### **30 March**

In commemoration of Land Day, Palestinians demonstrate at Ras al-Amud against the new Israeli settlement under construction and at the al-Ram checkpoint against the closure of

Jerusalem to West Bank Palestinians. (AQ)

### **5 April**

Interior Minister Natan Sharansky agrees to rescind past ministry decisions revoking residency rights of many East Jerusalem Palestinians. Sharansky's decision came in the form of a sworn affidavit to the High Court of Justice submitted to the High Court on 15 March, and was in response to petitions by human rights organizations. The Interior Ministry's willingness to reconsider the status of East Jerusalem Palestinians who have already lost their residency rights is an amplification of Sharansky's 17 October decision to rescind the policy that had come into force in 1995. At that time the Ministry introduced, unannounced, a new policy whereby Jerusalem-born Palestinians had to prove that Jerusalem was the "center of their life" to avoid losing their residency rights. (HA)

### **9 April**

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak informs his Cabinet that he has decided that the settlement blocs surrounding Jerusalem (Ma'ale Adumim, Pisgat Ze'ev, Gilot, and Ramot) will be part of "united Jerusalem" in the future. At the same time, he announces that the government has "no interest" in annexing the approximately 50,000 Palestinians living in Palestinian areas around the city, hinting that Arab villages such as Abu Dis and Anata will ultimately be transferred to the Palestinian authority. (HA, JP)

Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Eli Suissa confirms plans to extend the lease of the East Jerusalem Electric Company, which sells power to the city's Arab residents. The three-year extension is scheduled to be given at the beginning of May. Israeli settlement groups and right-wing parties had complained that some Jewish settlements in Arab areas of East Jerusalem receive erratic service from the company, pointing to the example of the Shimon Hatzaddik site in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. (AQ, HA)

### **10 April**

Sixty mayors from around the world convene for the annual Jerusalem Conference of Mayors. Stores in the Old City close their doors in protest against the conference and its recognition of Israeli sovereignty over occupied East Jerusalem. (AYM)

### **11 April**

The PNA makes an official complaint to Israel regarding the plan by the West Jerusalem Municipality to confiscate 658 dunums of land owned by Palestinians from Issawiyeh, al-Tour, Abu Dis, Ras al-Amud, and Sur Baher. (AYM)

### **12 April**

Despite the Israeli government's announced settlement freeze, the Israeli Settlements Council starts expansion work on Har Gilo (Jabal Abu Ghneim) settlement, south of occupied Jerusalem, twenty-four hours after a similar operation in Efrat Settlement. The PNA accuses Israel of burying the peace process, and the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) calls for negotiations with Israel to be suspended in protest. (HJ)

### **16 April**

Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits Muslim, Jewish, and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Faisal Husseini, PLO official responsible for Jerusalem affairs, escorts Jiang to al-Haram al-Sharif. He tells Jiang that the al-Aqsa Mosque, like the city itself, belongs to Palestinians, and asserts that such a high-profile visit is a diplomatic coup for the Palestinians. (JP)

### **23 April**

Jordan's King Abdullah meets with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in the Israeli town of Eilat. He tells Israel TV that he envisions a political solution for Jerusalem that has "two levels." One is a division of the city into two

political domains, and the other a declaration of Jerusalem as an open city to all three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (HA)


The Israel Defense Force (IDF) destroys five Palestinian homes in various stages of construction near the villages of Issawiyeh and Anata in north-eastern Jerusalem. The houses were built on land that is included in the blueprint for the Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, on land designated as "state land." For their part the Palestinian homeowners say that they have documents proving that the land is theirs, but that they do not have building permits, since such documents are all but impossible to obtain from Israeli authorities. A representative of Issawiyeh's council to protect the villages' lands, Umar Darwish, claims that the property in question has been owned by the village since the Ottoman period. (HA)

## 26 April

Israeli political sources say that Prime Minister Ehud Barak intends to transfer soon to full Palestinian control the village of Abu Dis as a "advance" on account of the IDF's third redeployment. The move is intended to demonstrate to Palestinians his "seriousness" prior to upcoming negotiations concerning the third redeployment and the framework agreement for the final settlement. (HA)

## Chronology Source Abbreviations

AQ	( <i>al-Quds</i> , Jerusalem)
AYM	( <i>al-Ayyam</i> , Ramallah)
HA	( <i>Ha'aretz</i> , Tel Aviv)
HJ	( <i>al-Hayat al-Jadida</i> , Gaza)
JMCC	(Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, Jerusalem)
VOP	(Voice of Palestine Radio)



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