

Jerusalem Chronology

May 2000 - July 2000

4 May

The Israeli cabinet puts on hold Prime Minister Ehud Barak's plan to give Palestinians full control over the villages of Abu Dis, Ezariyyeh, and Sawahreh just outside Jerusalem's municipal borders. (JP)

8 May

Peace Now calls on Prime Minister Ehud Barak to freeze plans to construct 200 housing units for Jews in a small section of the town of Abu Dis that is within the Jerusalem Municipal boundaries. The group issues the protest after learning that Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert gave the order to speed up the submission of the plans to the city's planning committee for approval in the coming week. (JP)

14 May

Palestinian National Authority officials (PNA) express anger with Greek President Constantino Stephanopoulos for not agreeing to meet with them in East Jerusalem, despite plans to meet with Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert in West Jerusalem. Palestinian officials also criticize the Greek government's plans to build a Greek Cultural Center in Jerusalem while the city's fate is still being negotiated in the final-status talks. Israel imports more goods from Greece than any other Middle Eastern country and is hoping to supply arms to Greece as part of the latter's

five-year \$16 billion military procurement program. (AYM, JP)

Dozens of protesters gather outside the house of Nasser Jamil Aqel of Mount Scopus to protest the Jerusalem Municipality's decision to demolish his house. A one-month court reprieve was received later in the day. Since 1973 the Israeli government and the Hebrew University have been pressuring the family to sell their home, without success. (JP)

15 May

The Knesset approves the transfer of three Arab villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem- Abu Dis, Ezariyyeh and Sawahreh-to full Palestinian control. (HA).

17 May

An Israeli public opinion poll shows that 71 percent of Israelis reject the idea of sharing sovereignty over Jerusalem with the Palestinians. Fifty-seven percent also reject transferring Abu Dis, Ezariyyeh, and Sawahreh to full Palestinian control. (HJ)

The Knesset approves a draft law that calls for safeguarding the current city limits as part of the basic law of the state of Israel. Palestinian officials charge that should the law be ratified, it would mean the end of the final-status negotiations. (AYM)

The Israeli Ministry of Housing and Construction and the Israel Lands Administration release tender bids for the construction of 582 additional housing units at the Jewish settlement of Har Homa in occupied East Jerusalem. (HA)

19 May

In response to the Nakba protests that began on 15 May, Prime Minister Ehud Barak decides to delay the transfer of Abu Dis, Ezariyyeh, and Sawahreh to full Palestinian authority. (JMCC)

21 May

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush says he will start moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem if he is elected president in November. (AQ)

22 May

A Jewish settlement in Abu Dis is approved by the local Israeli commission for planning and building. The plan for the 64-dunam settlement consisting of 200 living units will be passed on to the district commission of planning and building for approval. The PNA criticizes the decision as a blow to the peace process. (HA, HJ)

25 May

Israeli cabinet ministers approve a scheme to set up a 176 dunam (44 acre) national park on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, which will significantly advance Israeli efforts to cut off the Old City from the rest of Arab East Jerusalem. The plan will prohibit Palestinian development in the area and allow for the eventual confiscation of the property. The park is just one of seventeen projects, sponsored by groups of U.S. and other foreign investors, aimed at creating Jewish contiguity around the Old City. The projects, whose total investment will be \$150 million, will eventually lead to an unbroken Jewish presence from highway

no. 1 near Sheikh Jarrah to Abu Dis. (JP)

31 May

More than twenty Arab organizations belonging to the Arab League Council decide each to allocate 3 percent of its budget to assist the Palestinians in Jerusalem confront Israeli schemes that aim to judaize the city. Sources say these funds will reach millions of U.S. dollars. (AYM)

1 June

Israel celebrates "Jerusalem Day," the anniversary of the so-called "re-unification" of the city in 1967. Ehud Barak vows that the city will remain united under Israeli sovereignty. Mayor Olmert attends a celebration at the Har Homa settlement and announces that the 2,000 housing units currently under construction will be ready for residents within six months. The militant Jewish organization the Faithful of the Temple Mount marches past Orient House, blowing rams horns and waving Israeli flags, while Jewish settlers in the Old City march through the streets led by Likud leader Ariel Sharon. Israeli Minister of Interior Natan Sharansky reiterates that the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood is a "green area" and that new Arab construction there is illegal. (AQ, VOP, HA, JP)

5 June

Amidst clashes with Palestinian protesters, Israeli bulldozers and border police enforce an Interior Ministry Order and destroy the house of Hassan Khalifa in the village of Walajeh, southeast of Jerusalem. During

the last two years eight homes there have been destroyed and fifty more are marked for destruction because they were built without an Israeli permit. (HA)

7 June

Six Knesset members and a dozen right-wing activists visit the site of a planned Jewish settlement on the edge of Abu Dis, erecting a fence and planting Olive trees to delineate the border between the site and the area of the proposed Palestinian parliament building. (JP)

13 June

The results of the first Palestinian census in East Jerusalem are released, showing that the number of Palestinians in the city was 331,553 in 1998, well above Israel's estimate. The census predicts the number will reach 496,445 in 2010. Israel puts the figure of Palestinians in Jerusalem at 180,000. Hassan Abu Libdeh, head of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), says more than 210,209 Palestinians live in the part of Jerusalem forcibly annexed by Israeli after 1967 and the rest live in area J2, the remaining part of the Jerusalem governorate. (JP)

Bulldozers demolish the home of Hamsi Mugarbi in Jabal al-Mukaber. The Israeli Ministry of Interior claims that it had been built illegally on public land. (JP)

19 June

President Bill Clinton once again delays the move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem by waiving implementation of the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act of 1995

for another six months. He declares that the delay is "necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States." (Reuters)

28 June

Prime Minister Ehud Barak orders that the waqf, or Islamic religious trust, be permitted to continue its tiling work on about 200 meters of the eastern wall of the Haram al-Sharif. The Israeli attorney general, the Antiquities Authority, and Israeli Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert had all sought to halt or limit the work on the grounds that it threatened to destroy Jewish archeological artifacts in the area. (HA)

11 July

Israeli and Palestinian leaders meet at a U.S.-sponsored summit at Camp David, Maryland, in the hope of reaching agreement over the final status issues, including that of Jerusalem. Despite a press blackout on specifics of the negotiations, Jerusalem is quickly identified as the most divisive issue between the two sides, and intense local and international media reporting begins concerning the status of the city and possible solutions to the Jerusalem question.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel clarifies its position on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The two chief rabbis reaffirm their long-standing position that the halakha forbids any Jew from going onto the Mount until the return of the messiah. At the same time, they state that Jewish sovereignty over the Mount cannot be relinquished and that some kind of

tripartite Jewish-Muslim-Christian administration should be responsible for preserving the status quo arrangements. They deny earlier reports that they had agreed to Palestinian administration of the area. As for other holy sites such as Rachel's Tomb, Joseph's Tomb, and the Tomb of the Patriarchs, however, they would not oppose transfer of control to the Palestinians as long as appropriate measures are taken to guarantee access, prayer rights, and security for Jews at the sites. (HA, JP)

13 July

Press reports indicate that Barak will propose the following deal. He will grant Palestinians a high degree of "autonomy" for Arab neighborhoods in the city along with "religious sovereignty" over the Haram al-Sharif and free access to all holy places in the Old City. At the same time there will be an exchange of territory which will alter the borders of the city, annexing new Jewish areas and excluding some Arab areas. The Jewish settlements of Ma'aleh Adumim to the east, Givat Ze'ev to the north, and the Gush Etzion bloc to the south will be incorporated into Israeli Jerusalem, and Israel will gain international and Palestinian recognition of Israel's right to this redrawn Jerusalem. In exchange, some of the Palestinian neighborhoods currently within the municipal borders but not centrally located—such as Umm Tuba, Sur Baher, Beit Hanina and Shu'fat—will be transferred to the area of the Palestinian state. From the Israeli perspective, this arrangement will not only enlarge the physical area of

the city and secure international recognition, but also increase the city's Jewish majority. For it will remove heavily populated Arab villages formerly outside the old Jordanian municipal borders from the newly defined municipality, thereby reducing the Arab population of the city from 33 percent to 10 percent. Meanwhile, Palestinian areas still within the municipal borders like Sheikh Jarrah and Wadi al-Joz will come under some form of "shared sovereignty." According to Palestinian geographer Khalil Tufakji, this phrase most likely means that Israel will control construction and planning while Palestinians will be required to pay for schools, hospitals, and other services. (HA, MEI)

16 July

Israeli sources report that Barak has offered to cede up to 95 percent of West Bank land if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat agrees that Jerusalem will be under Israeli sovereignty. Palestinian officials reaffirm that no deal is possible without full Palestinian sovereignty over Arab East Jerusalem. (Reuters)

In response to reports that Barak is considering a deal that gives partial sovereignty to Palestinians over some Arab neighborhoods in the city, Israeli Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and representatives of seven opposition factions in the Knesset issue a joint declaration accusing Barak of "violating his pledge not to partition Jerusalem." (HA)

17 July

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat warns that without an agreement that would guarantee Palestinian control over al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, there will be no deal on any subject at Camp David. He also continues to insist that Palestinians must have full sovereignty over East Jerusalem with the exception of the Wailing Wall and the Jewish Quarter in the Old City. (HA)

A petition on behalf of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem is submitted to the Israeli High Court asking the court to require the government to provide adequate classroom space for Arab children in the city. According to the petition, of 62,000 school-age children in East Jerusalem in 1997, only 47,000 were registered by the municipality in Jerusalem schools. The rest attended Palestinian authority schools, or ended up on the streets. The petitioners estimate that as many as 2,000 Arab students were rejected from Israeli public schools last school year in spite of Israel's compulsory education law requiring the state to provide education to all citizens and permanent residents. (HA, HJ)

The heads of the Jerusalem churches write a letter to the three leaders meeting at Camp David demanding that the Christian communities within the walls of the Old City not be separated from each other. (HA, AQ)

20 July

A poll of likely voters in the United States finds that 43.4 percent believe that Jerusalem should be a shared capital controlled by both Israelis and Palestinians. Another 21.9 percent say Jerusalem should be entirely Israel's, 13.8 support neither choice, and 21 percent are undecided. (Reuters)

A poll by the Israeli paper Yediot Ahronot shows that 70 percent of Israelis are opposed to handing over any part of the city to Palestinian rule, while 27 percent say they would not oppose a handover. (Reuters)

23 July

Pope John Paul II appeals to the Camp David negotiators for a special international status for Jerusalem. (Reuters)

25 July

The Camp David Summit collapses, breaking down over the issue of Jerusalem. (AYM, JP)

26 July

Despite the failure of the summit, President Clinton says that there is room for an "honorable compromise" between Israel and the Palestinians on Jerusalem. (HA)

U.S. legislators announce that they are drawing up legislation that would cut off all U.S. aid to the Palestinians should Palestinian President Yasser Arafat unilaterally declare statehood on September 13. (JP)

28 July

In an interview broadcast on Israeli television President Clinton praises Barak for making "more courageous and creative" compromises than Arafat, warns the latter against a unilateral declaration of statehood, and says he will seriously reconsider the possibility of moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, saying a decision would be made by the end of the year. (HA)

30 July

The Islamic organizations Hamas and Hizbollah issue threats of violent retaliation should the U.S. move the embassy. (Reuters)

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 Communications Center, Jerusalem)
MEI	(<i>Middle East International</i> , London)
VOP	(Voice of Palestine Radio)
WR	(Wafa Report, Jerusalem)

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