

LFI

## ***Special Briefing:* Timeline of the Middle East peace process – 1 September 2010**

### **Key facts:**

- Since peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians began in the early 1990s, the Palestinians have been granted autonomous control over all of the Gaza Strip and most Palestinian urban areas in the West Bank. However, all attempts to agree a permanent two state solution have so far failed.
- The eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000, following the failure of the Camp David peace negotiations, brought almost all Israeli-Palestinian cooperation to an end. Following a significant reduction in Palestinian terrorism emanating from the West Bank, as a result of Israel's security barrier and Yasser Arafat's numerous militant factions being replaced by US-trained forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority (PA), cooperation on security and economic issues has deepened once again.
- Israel signed peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 and withdrew from all Lebanese land in 2000. Israel also withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip in 2005, leaving the PA in control of the whole territory. However, Hamas illegally seized control of Gaza from the PA in 2007, killing, maiming, imprisoning and expelling its Fatah political rivals.

### **The Oslo Accords - 1993**

- The 1993 Oslo Accords successfully created the PA to have responsibility for administering areas of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip. It also divided the West Bank into areas of sole Palestinian control (Area A), Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control (Area B) and sole Israeli control (Area C). Hamas' violent coup in the Gaza Strip in 2007 brought the PA's control of the coastal territory to an end.
- Secret negotiations over what became the Oslo Accords began in Norway following the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, which also led to the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994. The Madrid conference marked the first face-to-face talks between Israel and the Palestinians, represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), and followed the PLO's endorsement of a two state solution in 1988.
- The Accords were officially signed at a public ceremony in Washington on 13 September 1993, in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton.

### **The Camp David Summit – 2000**

- The Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David of July 2000 between then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, hosted by US President Bill Clinton, was an attempt to negotiate a "final status settlement" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The details of Israel's offer to the Palestinians were never officially released but according to numerous reports, Barak's proposal included an Israeli withdrawal from more than 90 percent of the West Bank and 100 percent of the Gaza Strip. The offer also reportedly included the granting of full Palestinian sovereignty of over Arab villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem, administrative control over numerous Arab areas within the city and "religious sovereignty" over the hilltop in Jerusalem's Old City known as the Temple Mount (by Jewish people) or al-Haram al-Sharif (by Muslim people).
- Blame for the collapse of the talks has been placed upon Arafat for his rejection of the Israeli offer and for his failure to suggest any counter-proposals. In his 2004 autobiography Clinton revealed that, three days before he left office, Yasser Arafat phoned him to thank him for his work, asserting "You are a great man". Clinton responded "I am not a great man, I am a failure. And you made me one". Furthermore, Clinton wrote that he believed Arafat did not accept Barak's offer as he had little appetite for the unglamorous work of "providing jobs, schools and basic services".

### **The Annapolis Peace Conference – 2007**

- The Annapolis Peace Conference was the culmination of the 2003 Road Map, sponsored by the Quartet (EU, UN, US and Russia). This was an open ended process, officially launched by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and then Palestinian Prime Minister (now President) Mahmoud Abbas in July 2003.
- **Instability caused by Palestinian terrorism, the death of Yasser Arafat, the electoral victory of Hamas and Ariel Sharon's stroke are some of the reasons why the Road Map became stalled. However, during this period, Israel withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank.**
- At the Annapolis Peace Conference of November 2007 the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas agreed to "immediately launch good faith, bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including core issues, without exception" by the end of 2008. Unlike at Camp David, the two parties openly declared a common goal to seek a two state solution to the conflict, as opposed to the broader term "final status settlement".
- Despite holding 288 separate private negotiation sessions over 2008 the two sides failed to reach agreement. However, in June 2009 chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat revealed that Abbas had turned down an Israeli offer that would have seen a Palestinian state created on territory equal in size to 100 percent of the land occupied in 1967, by means of a land swap. Speaking to Jordanian newspaper Al-Dustour, Erekat boasted "At Camp David they offered 90%, and (recently) they offered 100%. So why should we hurry, after the all the injustice we have suffered?" Abbas confirmed in December 2009 that Olmert had made this offer, but said that the talks collapsed and no decisions were made because of Israel's military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
- In the final days of his premiership, Ehud Olmert also wrote to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to declare that Israel accepts the Arab Peace Initiative (API) as the "framework in which we hold negotiations" for pursuing peace with the Palestinians as well as all 22 Arab League states.

### **2010 - It is expected that the recently announced talks will have to tackle the following issues:**

- **Security and borders** - Israel is calling for the demilitarisation of the future Palestinian state as well as the deployment of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) in the Jordan Valley to prevent weapons smuggling into the West Bank. PA President Mahmoud Abbas has called for a return to pre-1967 borders as a precondition for the talks and has rejected the presence of IDF soldiers.
- **Israeli settlements in the West Bank** – The PA has threatened to break off negotiations if the Israeli government does not extend its 10-month West Bank settlement construction freeze – due to expire at the end of September. The settlement freeze, the first in Israel's history, was enacted to encourage the Palestinians to return to direct negotiations. However, Israel says the future of these communities should now be discussed as one of the elements of a final-status agreement.
- **Jerusalem** – The Palestinians want all of East Jerusalem as their capital, including all of Jerusalem's Old City, which contains sites holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Palestinians also reject the existence of Jewish neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem, which cross the 1967 armistice line.
- **Palestinian refugees and the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state** – The PA and its leaders have never specifically recognised Israel as a Jewish state and also continue to demand that all 1948 Palestinian refugees and their decedents should be able to resettle in Israel proper. The Israeli position is that those who wish should seek their future in the proposed Palestinian state. In addition, Israeli leaders have previously suggested that a minority of the refugees be able to return to Israel proper, with financial compensation for those that do not.
- **Access to crucial resources including water** - Both sides suffer from water scarcity and must work together to provide mutual fair access from all sources.

**Hamas has opposed all peace initiatives between Israel and the Palestinians and frequently uses violence to derail any progress made. Four Israelis were murdered by Hamas gunmen in the West Bank on Tuesday (31 August) in an attempt to wreck this latest initiative.**