

# What are the Missing Elements in the Diplomatic Efforts in the Middle East?



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Fact Sheet



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We would like to thank Philip Evans for the excellent work he has done on creating this fact sheet

# IRAN

# 1 Iran

## 1.1 Tehran's history with nuclear weapons:

- Iran first established its nuclear programme in 1957, under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, with an agreement on nuclear cooperation with the United States under the Atoms for Peace programme. The agreement stipulated that the two countries would work together in the research and development of peaceful nuclear technology and that Iran could lease uranium.
- In 1960 Iran purchased from the United States a small research reactor, which is located at the Tehran Nuclear Research Centre.
- (<http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-nuclear-program>)
- In 1968 Iran signed up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), thereby pledging not to develop nuclear weapons (it was amongst the first countries to do so).
- In 1974 the Shah established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and outlined a plan to develop 20 nuclear power plants which would produce 23,000 megawatts of electricity by 1994.
- The United States, France and West Germany sought lucrative power reactor deals with Iran: in 1974 Iran signed a contract with the German firm Kraftwerk Union to build two reactors at Bushehr.
- According to the former head of the AEOI, Akbar Etemad, the shah wanted to keep open the option of developing nuclear weapons by seeking access to the full nuclear fuel cycle.
- The Islamic Revolution of 1979 put a stop to Iran's nuclear efforts until 1984. A cessation in bilateral relations between Iran and the United States also brought their nuclear cooperation to an end.
- The 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war heavily influenced Ayatollah Khomeini's decision to restart Iran's nuclear programme. Calls from within the political establishment to restart the programme were bolstered by the fear of the United States and growing indications of a covert Iraqi nuclear weapons programme.
- According to statements made to the IAEA, shortly after Iran launched its uranium-enrichment programme in the mid 1980s, it contacted the nuclear-black-market network led by Pakistani metallurgist Abdul Qadeer Khan for the basic technology and a starter set for gas-centrifuge enrichment.
- In 1999 and 2002 Iran conducted tests on test centrifuges – these tests constituted violations of Iran's safeguards agreements, or violations of Iran's verification requirements under the NPT.
- In 2002 an Iranian dissident group told the world that Tehran was building secret nuclear facilities in Arak and Natanz, located South of Tehran. Iran confirmed to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it was building two uranium enrichment plants at Natanz and a heavy-water production facility at Arak. Tehran insisted, however, that its nuclear programme was peaceful and legitimate and that it had no intentions of producing nuclear weapons.
- In the autumn of 2003 the EU-3 (Britain, France and Germany) succeeded in persuading Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities and implement the NPT's Additional Protocol.
- In November 2003 IAEA Director-General Mohamed El Baradei reported that Iran had violated its safeguards agreement in 14 different ways over an 18-year period.
- In December 2003 Iran signed an accord that gave the United Nations full access to its nuclear facilities.

- In 2004 Iran and the EU-3 signed the Paris Agreement, which extended the temporary suspension of Iran's nuclear activities, pending negotiations of long-term arrangements.
- In May 2005 Iran announced it was getting impatient with the pace of negotiations and would soon resume uranium enrichment activities.
- In August 2005 Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa against the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons.
- In mid-2009, the United States joined the EU-3 in diplomatic negotiations with Iran, after years of refusing to do so. These negotiations did not produce a breakthrough.
- In September 2009, the United States, France and Britain publicly revealed the existence of a secret uranium enrichment site being built near the city of Qom – this prompted concern that Iran intended to construct a potential breakout facility where it could make weapon-grade uranium for a bomb at short notice.
- Between 2006 and 2010 the UN Security Council passed four rounds of economic sanctions against Iran.

## 1.2 Diplomatic efforts between Iran and the West:

Diplomatic initiatives designed to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue have produced several proposals for a negotiated settlement or to build confidence between Iran and the 'international community'. All of the following initiatives have failed to gain acceptance from all involved parties:

- Spring 2003 proposal: according to Tim Guldemann, former Swiss ambassador to Tehran, Iran issued a proposal to the United States in May 2003 calling for negotiations on issues including: **relief of all US sanctions on Iran; cooperation to stabilize Iraq; full disclosure on Iran's nuclear programme, including the Additional Protocol; cooperation against terrorist organization, particularly the Mujahedin-e Khalq and al-Qaeda; Iran's acceptance of the Arab League's 2002 "land for peace" declaration on Israel/Palestine; Iran's full access to nuclear technology, as well as chemical and bio-technology.**

The Bush administration dismissed the proposal in favour of placing additional pressure on Iran.

EU-3-Iran Proposals: several months later, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom agreed to discuss with Iran a range of nuclear, security, and economic issues as long as Tehran suspended work on its uranium enrichment programme and cooperated fully with an investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, that agreement unraveled the following year when Tehran continued work on uranium conversion, the precursor to enrichment. Iran then agreed with the EU3 in November 2004 to implement a more stringent suspension. Negotiations between the two sides began shortly afterward. Iran presented four proposals during the course of these negotiations. In addition to Iran's nuclear program, the proposals covered subjects such as Tehran's support for terrorist organizations, regional security issues, and economic cooperation. The Iranian proposals were as follows:

- January 17, 2005  
 This Iranian proposal to the EU3/Iran Political and Security Working Group outlined commitments on both sides in general terms, including: **an Iranian commitment not to pursue weapons of mass destruction; a rejection of any attacks, threats of attack, or sabotage of Iran's nuclear facilities; cooperation on combating terrorism, including intensifying the exchange of information and the denial of safe havens; regional security cooperation, including on Iraq and Afghanistan; cooperation on strategic trade controls and the EU removal of restrictions on transfers of conventional arms and dual use goods to Iran.**
- March 23, 2005  
 The Iranian proposal to the EU3/Iran steering committee in March provided greater detail into the "objective guarantees" Iran was willing to discuss regarding its nuclear program, including: **Iran's adoption to the IAEA Additional Protocol and continuous on-site inspections at key facilities; limiting the expansion of Iran's enrichment programme and a policy declaration of no reprocessing; immediately converting all enriched uranium to fuel rods; an EU declaration recognising Iran as a major source of energy for Europe; Iran's guaranteed access to advanced nuclear technology along with contracts for the construction of nuclear plants in Iran by the EU; normalising Iran's status under G8 export controls.**
- April 29, 2005  
 In April Iran's proposal repeated some of the items in the March proposal, but focused more on short-term confidence-building measures than long term resolutions. Its key terms included: **Iran's adoption of the IAEA Additional Protocol; a policy declaration of no reprocessing by Iran; continued enrichment suspension for six months; establishment of joint task forces on counter-terrorism and export control; an EU declaration recognising Iran as a major source of energy for Europe.**
- July 18, 2005  
 Iranian Message from Hassan Rowhani, then-Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, to France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In his statement Rohani proposes: **an agreement of initial limitations on uranium enrichment at Natanz; negotiations for the full-scale operation of Natanz; arrangements to import material for uranium conversion and the export of UF<sub>6</sub>; negotiation of an 'optimized' IAEA monitoring mechanism for Natanz.**
- August 2005  
 The three European countries presented their own comprehensive proposal for a long-term agreement, outlining the following: **arrangements for the assured supply of low enriched uranium for any light water reactors constructed in Iran; establishing a buffer store of nuclear fuel located in a third country; a commitment by Iran not to pursue fuel cycle technologies, reviewable after 10 years; a legally binding commitment by Iran not to withdraw from the NPT and Iran's adoption of the Additional Protocol; arrangements for Iran to return spent nuclear fuel to supplier countries; EU recognition of Iran as a long-term source of fossil fuel energy; EU-Iran cooperation in a variety of political-security areas, including Iraq and Afghanistan, terrorism and drug trafficking.**

Iran rejected that proposal days later, claiming that it did not recognize Iran's right to enrichment. Tehran proceeded with uranium conversion, breaking the suspension agreement with the EU3 and ending negotiations. In order to support Iran's talks with the EU, Russia proposed to Iran in October 2005 that Tehran share ownership of a uranium-enrichment plant located in Russia. Following months of discussions on that proposal, Iran ultimately rejected it in March 2006.

- P5+1 Proposals

China, Russia, and the United States joined the three EU3 countries in June 2006 to offer another proposal for comprehensive negotiations with Iran. The proposal mirrored some of the previous offers for negotiations and included the following key points: **Iran's suspension of enrichment-related and reprocessing activities; the establishment of a mechanism to review this moratorium; Iran's resumption of the Additional Protocol; the provision of state-of-the-art light water reactors to Iran through joint projects, along with nuclear fuel guarantees and a 5-year buffer stock of fuel; suspension of the discussion of Iran's nuclear programme in the UN Security Council; cooperation on civil aviation, telecommunications, high-technology and agriculture, and other areas, between the United States, EU and Iran**

Tehran responded to this proposal in August 2006. It rejected the terms of the proposal due to its requirement that Iran suspend its enrichment-related activities, but noted that the proposal contained "useful foundations and capacities for comprehensive and long-term cooperation between the two sides." It did not, however, identify what those useful foundations were. In March 2008, the P5+1 agreed to "repackage" the June 2006 proposal in order to specify some of the benefits that they would offer Iran as part of a long-term agreement on its nuclear program and to better demonstrate the nature of those benefits to the Iranian public.

This agreement to revise the 2006 proposal coincided with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1803, the third UN sanctions resolution on Iran. Before that package was formally submitted to Iran, however, Tehran issued its own proposal to the six-country group. While the Iranian proposal also called for comprehensive negotiations leading to cooperation on nuclear energy, and political and economic concerns, it offered very few details regarding the steps Iran would take to resolve concerns related to its nuclear program. Some of its key provisions were: **establishing enrichment and nuclear fuel production consortiums in different parts of the world – including Iran; improved IAEA supervision in 'different states'; cooperation on nuclear safety and physical protection; cooperation on export controls; cooperation on regional security and global economic issues.**

The P5+1 group presented their revised package during a June 2008 meeting in Tehran which included participants from five of the six countries, excluding the United States. During the meeting, the six-countries relayed an understanding that preliminary talks could begin under a six-week "freeze-for-freeze" period in which Iran would halt the expansion of its enrichment program while the six countries would agree not to pursue additional sanctions against Tehran.

The proposal also entailed: **the 2006 package remains on the table; consideration of nuclear energy R&D and treatment of Iran's nuclear programme as any other NPT non-nuclear weapons state once confidence is restored; technological and financial assistance for Iran's nuclear energy programme; reaffirmation of the UN Charter obligation to refrain from the use and threat of use of force in a manner inconsistent with the Charter; cooperation on Afghanistan, including drug-trafficking, refugee return, reconstruction, and border controls; steps towards normalising economic and trade relations, including support for WTO membership for Iran; further details on the prospect for cooperation on agriculture, the environment and infrastructure, civil aviation, and social development and humanitarian issues.**

Representatives of the six-country group, including the United States for the first time, followed up the June meeting with a meeting in July 2008 in Geneva. At the meeting, Iran issued a non-paper proposing a process for negotiations, highlighting that such discussions would be "based on the commonalities of the two packages" issued by Iran and the P5+1 group in May and June. Both the P5+1 and Iranian proposals called for political, economic, and security cooperation but the Iranian proposal did not address steps that Tehran would take in regard to its nuclear programme. The Geneva discussions were inconclusive. Following the election of President Barack Obama, who sought to abandon the previous US policy requiring Iran to fulfill UN Security Council demands to suspend nuclear fuel cycle activities prior to negotiations, the P5+1 sought to renew their negotiations with Iran. They issued a statement in April 2009 in which the other five countries welcomed "the new direction of U.S. policy towards Iran," formally inviting Iran to talks once again. Iran did not respond to that invitation until that September, when Tehran issued a revised proposal. Although that proposal repeated several of the provisions of the one Iran issued in 2008, it did not include a section on the nuclear issue. Instead, the proposal covered the following: **cooperation to address terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and piracy; UN and Security Council reform; the codification of rights for the use of space; promoting a 'rules-based' and 'equitable' IAEA oversight function; promoting NPT universality and WMD nonproliferation.**

- Tehran Research Reactor 'Fuel Swap' Proposal

In June 2009, Iran informed the IAEA that it was seeking assistance to refuel its Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), a U.S.-supplied 5 megawatt research reactor that produces medical isotopes. Following Iran's entreaty, the United States proposed that, in return for a supply of 120 kilograms of fuel for the TRR, Iran ship out an equivalent amount of uranium enriched to 4%, totaling about 1,200 kilograms. The 1,200 kilograms accounted for roughly 80% of Iran's LEU stockpile at that time, a percentage that diminished as Iran continued to produce LEU. At an initial meeting between the United States, France, Russia, Iran, and the IAEA October 1, 2009, Iranian officials agreed "in principle" to the exchange. The proposal included the following: **Iran exports 1,200 kilograms of LEU in a single batch before the end of 2009; Russia further enriches Iran's LEU to about 20%, a process producing about 120 kilograms of 20%-enriched uranium for the TRR fuel rods; France manufactures the TRR fuel rods for delivery about one year after the conclusion of the agreement, prior to the depletion of the current TRR fuel supply; the United States works with the IAEA to improve safety and control implementation at the TRR.**

Following reservations expressed by Iran about the terms of the deal, the P5+1 indicated their readiness to take some steps to facilitate the arrangement: **a political statement of support by the six countries to guarantee that the TRR fuel would be delivered to Iran; financing for the movement of LEU and fuel; an option for the IAEA to hold Iran's LEU in escrow in a third country until the TRR fuel is delivered.**

In the months following the initial agreement of the TRR proposal Oct. 1, Iran delayed giving the IAEA and the P5+1 a definitive response to the proposal, with many prominent Iranian politicians voicing their opposition to the arrangement, motivated at least in part by their opposition to President Ahmadinejad. Iranian officials publicly suggested alterations to the fuel swap proposal, including: staggering the export of Iran's LEU over the course of a year or transporting 400 kilograms of LEU to Iran's Kish Island to exchange for TRR fuel. These proposals, however, undermined or eliminated the confidence-building nature of the export of the bulk of Iran's LEU. Tehran began to increase the enrichment level of some of its LEU to 20% in February 2010, ostensibly for TRR fuel.

- Brazil, Turkey, Iran Tehran Proposal

Brazil and Turkey carried out a diplomatic initiative in the Spring of 2010 to broker the TRR fuel swap with Iran. In an April 20 letter to the leaders of the two countries, President Obama said Iran's agreement to export 1,200 kilograms of LEU "would build confidence and reduce regional tensions by substantially reducing Iran's LEU stockpile." The initiative resulted in the May 17 Tehran Declaration agreed between Presidents Lula da Silva, Erdogan, and Ahmadinejad: **the three countries 'recall the right of all State Parties, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy; Iran transfers 1,200 kilograms of LEU to be held in escrow in Turkey within one month; pending their approval of the Tehran Declaration, the IAEA, France, Russia, and the United States (the Vienna Group) would agree to provide 120 kilograms of 20%-enriched uranium fuel to Iran within one year; if the terms were not fulfilled by the Vienna Group, Turkey would transfer the LEU back to Iran (which maintains legal possession of the material).**

France, Russia, and the United States rejected the Tehran Declaration on a number of grounds identified in a June 9 letter to IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano. The key critique was that the declaration did not address Iran's production of 20%-enriched uranium and Iran's accumulation of a larger amount of LEU.

- Russian Step-by-Step Proposal

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov first publicly proposed a "road map" to implement the P5+1's proposed incentives package July 12, 2011 during a speech in Washington. The proposal itself has not been made public, but its key elements have been described by former Iranian deputy nuclear negotiator Hossein Mousavian.

**Step 1: Iran limits enrichment to Natanz, does not install any additional centrifuges, and halts the production of advanced centrifuges; the P5+1 suspends some UN sanctions, including financial sanctions and ship inspections.**

**Step 2: Iran agrees to provide early design information to the IAEA under Code 3:1, caps its enrichment level at 5%, and allows greater IAEA monitoring over its centrifuges; the P5+1 suspends most UN sanctions and gradually lifts unilateral sanctions.**

**Step 3: Iran implements the IAEA Additional Protocol; the P5+1 suspends all UN sanctions in a phased manner.**

**Step 4: Iran suspends all enrichment-related activities for 3 months; the P5+1 lifts all sanctions and begins to implement the group's proposed incentives.**

Other P5+1 members have not voiced public opposition to the Russian proposal, but some do not appear to support it in its current form. U.S. officials have said that Washington is studying the proposal, and have held meetings with Moscow regarding the plan. Similarly, Iran publicly welcomed the proposal but has been non-committal regarding its terms, claiming it would take several months to study.

#### 2012 Proposals

In April 2012, the P5+1 and Iran renewed diplomatic negotiations in Istanbul. Two more rounds of talks were held May 23-24 in Baghdad, and June 18-19 in Moscow. The negotiators decided in Istanbul to adopt a step-by-step process with reciprocal actions, in order to create momentum towards a long-term solution. Two proposals are being discussed in the ongoing negotiations, one proposed by the P5+1 and another from the Iranians. Both sides agreed to expert-level talks, which took place in Istanbul on July 3, to discuss the technical aspects of each proposal. A fourth round of top-level political meetings has not yet been scheduled.

- Iranian 5 step proposal

**Step 1: Iran emphasizes commitments under the NPT and its opposition to nuclear weapons based on the Supreme Leader's fatwa; P5+1 recognizes and openly announces Iran's nuclear rights, particularly its enrichment activities, based on NPT Article IV.**

**Step 2: Iran continues broad cooperation with IAEA and will transparently cooperate with the IAEA and will transparently cooperate with the IAEA on 'possible military dimensions'; P5+1 will end unilateral and multilateral sanctions against Iran outside of the UNSC resolutions.**

**Step 3: beyond continuous IAEA monitoring of enrichment activities for Tehran Research Reactor fuel, Iran will cooperate with P5+1 to provide enriched fuel needed for TRR; P5+1 will terminate the UN sanctions and remove Iran's nuclear file from UNSC agenda.**

**Step 4: parties will start and boost cooperation on: designing and building nuclear power plants and research reactors (Iran's priorities); and light water research reactors, nuclear safety and security, nuclear fusion (P5+1 priorities).**

**Step 5: parties will start cooperating on: regional issues, especially Syria and Bahrain (Iran's priorities); and combating piracy and countering narcotics activities (P5+1 priorities)**

- P5+1 Proposal

**Iranian actions: Iran halts all 20 percent enrichment activities; Iran transfers all 20 percent enriched uranium to a third country under IAEA custody; Iran shuts down the Fordow facility.**

**P5+1 actions: P5+1 will provide fuel assemblies for the Tehran Research Reactor; P5+1 will support IAEA technical cooperation to modernize and maintain the safety of the TRR; P5+1 could review the IAEA technical cooperation projects and recommend to the IAEA Board restarting some of them; P5+1 has put together a detailed package to provide medical isotopes for cancer patients in Iran; the United States is prepared to permit safety-related inspection and repair in Iran for Iranian commercial aircraft and provide space parts; the P5+1 will cooperate in acquiring a light water research reactor to produce medical isotopes.**

To date, the UN Security Council has adopted six resolutions in response to Iran's nuclear program. The council first demanded that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities with the adoption of resolution 1696 in July 2006. The following three resolutions, 1737 adopted in December 2006, 1747 adopted in March 2007, and 1803 adopted in March 2008, imposed incremental sanctions on Iranian persons and entities believed to have been involved in Iran's nuclear and missile programs. Resolution, 1835, adopted in September 2008, reiterated the demands made in resolution 1696 without imposing additional sanctions. The UN Security Council significantly expanded sanctions in June 2010 with the adoption of Resolution 1929.

# Israel/Palestine

## 2. Israel-Palestine

### 2.1 History of conflict

- 1917:** At the time of World War I the area was ruled by the Turkish Ottoman empire. Turkish control ended when Arab forces backed by Britain drove out the Ottomans. Britain occupied the region at the end of the war in 1918 and was assigned as the mandatory power by the League of Nations on 25 April 1920. During this period of change, three key pledges were made. In 1916 the British Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, had promised the Arab leadership post-war independence for former Ottoman Arab provinces. However, at the same time, the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement between war victors, Britain and France, divided the region under their joint control. Then in 1917, the British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour committed Britain to work towards "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people", in a letter to leading Zionist Lord Rothschild. It became known as the Balfour Declaration.
- 1947, UN partition of Palestine:** The territory was plagued with chronic unrest pitting native Arabs against Jewish immigrants (who now made up about a third the population, owning about 6% of the land). The situation had become more critical with the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Jews fleeing the Nazi persecution in Europe. Some six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust during World War II. The UN set up a special committee which recommended splitting the territory into separate Jewish and Palestinian states. Palestinian representatives, known as the Arab Higher Committee, rejected the proposal; their counterparts in the Jewish Agency accepted it. The partition plan gave 56.47% of Palestine to the Jewish state and 43.53% to the Arab state, with an international enclave around Jerusalem. On 29 November 1947, 33 countries of the UN General Assembly voted for partition, 13 voted against and 10 abstained. The plan, which was rejected by the Palestinians, was never implemented. Britain announced its intention to terminate its Palestine mandate on 15 May 1948 but hostilities broke out before the date arrived. The death of British soldiers in the conflict made the continuing presence in Palestine deeply unpopular in Britain. In addition, the British resented American pressure to allow in more Jewish refugees - a sign of growing US support for Zionism. Both Arab and Jewish sides prepared for the coming confrontation by mobilising forces. The first "clearing" operations were conducted against Palestinian villages by Jewish forces in December.
- 1948, Establishment of Israel:** The State of Israel, the first Jewish state for nearly 2,000 years, was proclaimed at 1600 on 14 May 1948 in Tel Aviv. The day after the state of Israel was declared five Arab armies from Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq immediately invaded Israel but were repulsed, and the Israeli army crushed pockets of resistance. Armistices established Israel's borders on the frontier of most of the earlier British Mandate Palestine. Egypt kept the Gaza Strip while Jordan annexed the area around East Jerusalem and the land now known as the West Bank. These territories made up about 25% of the total area of British Mandate Palestine.
- 1964, Formation of PLO:** Since 1948 there had been fierce competition between neighbouring states to lead an Arab response to the creation of Israel. That left the Palestinians as passive onlookers. In January 1964, Arab governments - wanting to create a Palestinian organisation that would remain essentially under their control - voted to create a body called the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

- But the Palestinians wanted a genuinely independent body, and that was the goal of Yasser Arafat who took over the chairmanship of the PLO in 1969. His Fatah organisation (founded in secret five years earlier) was gaining notoriety with its armed operations against Israel. Fatah fighters inflicted heavy casualties on Israeli troops at Karamah in Jordan in 1968.
- **1967, 1967 war:** Mounting tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbours culminated in six days of hostilities starting on 5 June 1967 and ending on 11 June - six days which changed the face of the Middle East conflict. Israel seized Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt in the south and the Golan Heights from Syria in the north. It also pushed Jordanian forces out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Egypt's powerful air force was put out of action on the first day of fighting when Israeli jets bombed it on the ground in a pre-emptive strike. The territorial gains doubled the area of land controlled by Israel. The victory heralded a new age of confidence and optimism for Israel and its supporters. The UN Security Council issued resolution 242, stressing "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security". The resolution called for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict". It also called for an end to "all claims or states of belligerency and respect for... the sovereignty... of every state in the area and their right to live in peace... free from threats or acts of force". According to the UN, the conflict displaced another 500,000 Palestinians who fled to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.
- **1973, the Yom Kippur war:** Unable to regain the territory they had lost in 1967 by diplomatic means, Egypt and Syria launched major offensives against Israel on the Jewish festival of the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. Initially, Egypt and Syria made advances in Sinai and the Golan Heights. These were reversed after three weeks of fighting. Israel eventually made gains beyond the 1967 ceasefire lines. Israeli forces pushed on into Syria beyond the Golan Heights, though they later gave up some of these gains. In Egypt, Israeli forces regained territory and advanced to the western side of the Suez Canal. The United States, the Soviet Union and the United Nations all made diplomatic interventions to bring about ceasefire agreements between the combatants. Egypt and Syria jointly lost an estimated 8,500 soldiers in the fighting, while Israel lost about 6,000. The war left Israel more dependent on the US for military, diplomatic and economic support. Soon after the war, Saudi Arabia led a petroleum embargo against states that supported Israel. The embargo, which caused a steep rise in petrol prices and fuel shortages across the world, lasted until March 1974. In October 1973 the UN Security Council passed resolution 338 which called for the combatants "to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately... [and start] negotiations between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East".
- **1974, Arafat's first UN appearance:** In the 1970s, under Yasser Arafat's leadership, PLO factions and other militant Palestinian groups such as Abu Nidal launched a series of attacks on Israeli and other targets. One such attack took place at the Munich Olympics in 1972 in which 11 Israeli athletes were killed. But while the PLO pursued the armed struggle to "liberate all of Palestine", in 1974, Arafat made a dramatic first appearance at the United Nations mooted a peaceful solution. He condemned the Zionist project, but concluded: "Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."

- The speech was a watershed in the Palestinians' search for international recognition of their cause. A year later, a US State Department official, Harold Saunders, acknowledged for the first time that "the legitimate interests of the Palestinian Arabs must be taken into account in the negotiating of an Arab-Israeli peace".
- **1979, Egypt and Israel make peace:** President Sadat became the first Arab leader to recognise Israel, only four years after launching the October 1973 war (known as the Yom Kippur war in Israel). The war was indecisive after Egypt and Syria had attacked Israeli forces occupying Sinai and the Golan Heights. It ended with the issuing of UN Resolution 338 calling for "a just and durable peace in the Middle East". Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David accords in September 1978 outlining "the framework for peace in the Middle East" which included limited autonomy for Palestinians. A bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was signed by Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin six months later in March 1979. The Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had seized in the 1967 war, was returned to Egypt. Arab states boycotted Egypt for breaking ranks and negotiating a separate treaty with Israel. Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by Islamist elements in the Egyptian army, who opposed peace with Israel, during national celebrations to mark the anniversary of the October war.
- **1982, Israel invades Lebanon:** The Israeli army launched a massive military incursion into Lebanon in the summer of 1982. Operation "Peace for Galilee" was intended to wipe out Palestinian guerrilla bases near Israel's northern border, although Defence Minister Ariel Sharon pushed all the way to Beirut and expelled the PLO from the country. The invasion began on 6 June, less than two months after the last Israeli troops and civilians were pulled out of Sinai under the 1979 treaty with Egypt. The action was triggered by the attempt on the life of Israeli ambassador to London Shlomo Argov by the dissident Palestinian group Abu Nidal. Israeli troops reached Beirut in August. A ceasefire agreement allowed the departure of PLO fighters from Lebanon, leaving Palestinian refugee camps defenceless. As Israeli forces gathered around Beirut on 14 September, Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Christian Phalange militia, was killed by a bomb at his HQ in the capital. The following day, the Israeli army occupied West Beirut. From 16 to 18 September, the Phalangists - who were allied to Israel - killed hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps as they were encircled by Israeli troops in one of the worst atrocities of nearly a century of conflict in the Middle East. Mr Sharon resigned from his post as defence minister after a 1983 Israeli inquiry concluded that he had failed to act to prevent the massacre.
- **1987, Palestinian intifada:** A mass uprising - or intifada - against the Israeli occupation began in Gaza and quickly spread to the West Bank. Protest took the form of civil disobedience, general strikes, boycotts on Israeli products, graffiti, and barricades, but it was the stone-throwing demonstrations against the heavily-armed occupation troops that captured international attention. The Israeli Defence Forces responded and there was heavy loss of life among Palestinian civilians. More than 1,000 died in clashes which lasted until 1993.
- **1988, PLO opens door to peace:** Despite its military might, Israel was unable to quell the intifada which started in 1987 and was backed by the entire Palestinian population living under Israeli occupation. For the PLO - based in Tunis since its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982 - the uprising threatened the loss of its role as the main player in the Palestinian "revolution" as focus shifted to the occupied territories and away from the diaspora population.

The Palestinian National Council (a government-in-exile) convened in Algeria in November 1988 and voted to accept a "two-state" solution based on the 1947 UN partition resolution (181), renounce terrorism and seek a negotiated settlement based on Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territory captured in the 1967 war, and Resolution 338. The US began dialogue with the PLO. But Israel continued to view the PLO as a terrorist organisation with which it would not negotiate. Instead, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir proposed elections in the occupied territories before negotiations on a self-rule agreement.

- **1991, Madrid Summit:** The 1991 Gulf War was a disaster for the PLO and its leader Yasser Arafat whose support for Iraq alienated his wealthy supporters in the Gulf. With Kuwait liberated from Iraqi control, the US administration devoted itself to Middle East peacemaking - a prospect more appealing to the financially weakened and politically isolated Arafat than Israel's hard-line Likud prime minister Yitzhak Shamir. Numerous visits by the US Secretary of State James Baker prepared the ground for an international summit in Madrid. Syria agreed to attend, hoping to negotiate a return of the Golan Heights. Jordan also accepted the invitation. But Shamir refused to talk directly with PLO "terrorists", so a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was formed with prominent Palestinian figures-who were not from the PLO - taking part. In the days before the summit, Washington withheld \$10bn of loan guarantees from Israel in a rare moment of discord over the building of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.
- **1993, the Oslo Peace Process:** With the Washington bilateral talks going nowhere, the secret "Oslo track" - opened on 20 January 1993 in the Norwegian town of Sarpsborg - made unprecedented progress. The Palestinians consented to recognise Israel in return for the beginning of phased dismantling of Israel's occupation. Negotiations culminated in the Declaration of Principles, signed on the White House lawn and sealed with a historic first handshake between Rabin and Yasser Arafat
- **1994, Birth of the Palestinian Authority:** On 4 May 1994 Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation reached an agreement in Cairo on the initial implementation of the 1993 Declaration of Principles. This document specified Israel's military withdrawal from most of the Gaza Strip, excluding Jewish settlements and land around them, and from the Palestinian town of Jericho in the West Bank. Negotiations were difficult and were almost derailed on 25 February when a Jewish settler in the West Bank town of Hebron fired on praying Muslims, killing 29 people. The agreement itself contained potential pitfalls. It envisaged further withdrawals during a five-year interim period during which solutions to the really difficult issues were to be negotiated - issues such as the establishment of a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories and the fate of more than 3.5 million Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 upheavals. Many critics of the peace process were silenced on 1 July as jubilant crowds lined the streets of Gaza to cheer Yasser Arafat on his triumphal return to Palestinian territory. The returning Palestinian Liberation Army deployed in areas vacated by Israeli troops and Arafat became head of the new Palestinian National Authority (PA) in the autonomous areas. He was elected president of the Authority in January 1996.
- **1995, Oslo II and the assassination of Rabin:** The first year of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho was dogged by difficulties. Bomb attacks by Palestinian militants killed dozens of Israelis, while Israel blockaded the autonomous areas and assassinated militants. Settlement activity continued. The Palestinian Authority quelled unrest by mass detentions.

- Opposition to the peace process grew among right-wingers and religious nationalists in Israel. Against this background, peace talks were laborious and fell behind schedule. But on 24 September the so-called Oslo II agreement was signed in Taba in Egypt, and countersigned four days later in Washington. The agreement divided the West Bank into three zones: Zone A comprised 7% of the territory (the main Palestinian towns excluding Hebron and East Jerusalem) going to full Palestinian control; Zone B comprised 21% of the territory under joint Israeli-Palestinian control; Zone C stayed in Israeli hands. Israel was also to release Palestinian prisoners. Further handovers followed. Oslo II was greeted with little enthusiasm by Palestinians, while Israel's religious right was furious at the "surrender of Jewish land". Amid an incitement campaign against Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Jewish religious extremist assassinated him on 4 November, sending shock waves around the world. The dovish Shimon Peres, architect of the faltering peace process, became prime minister.
- **1996-1999, Deadlock:** Conflict returned early in 1996 with a series of devastating suicide bombings in Israel carried out by the Islamic militant group Hamas, and a bloody three-week bombardment of Lebanon by Israel. Peres narrowly lost elections on 29 May to the right-wing Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, who campaigned against the Oslo peace deals under the motto "Peace with Security". Netanyahu soon enflamed Arab opinion by lifting a freeze on building new settlements in the occupied territories and provoking fears about undermining Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem by opening an archaeological tunnel under the compound of al-Aqsa mosque - one of Islam's holiest sites. Despite his antagonism towards the existing peace process, Netanyahu, under increasing US pressure, handed over 80% of Hebron in January 1997 and signed the Wye River Memorandum on 23 October 1998 outlining further withdrawals from the West Bank. But his right-wing coalition collapsed in January 1999 in disarray over the implementation of the Wye deal. He lost elections on 18 May to Labour's Ehud Barak who pledged to "end the 100-year conflict" between Israel and the Arabs within one year. The five-year interim period defined by Oslo for a final resolution passed on 4 May 1999, but Yasser Arafat was persuaded to defer unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood to give a chance for negotiations with the new administration.
- **2000, Second Intifada:** Initial optimism about the peacemaking prospects of a government led by Ehud Barak proved unfounded. A new Wye River accord was signed in September 1999 but further withdrawals from occupied land were hindered by disagreements and final status talks (on Jerusalem, refugees, settlements and borders) got nowhere. Frustration was building in the Palestinian population who had little to show for five years of the peace process. Barak concentrated on peace with Syria - also unsuccessfully. But he did succeed in fulfilling a campaign pledge to end Israel's 21-year entanglement in Lebanon. After the withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, attention turned back to Yasser Arafat, who was under pressure from Barak and US President Bill Clinton to abandon gradual negotiations and launch an all-out push for a final settlement at the presidential retreat at Camp David. Two weeks of talks failed to come up with acceptable solutions to the status of Jerusalem and the right of return of Palestinian refugees. In the uncertainty of the ensuing impasse, Ariel Sharon, the veteran right-winger who succeeded Binyamin Netanyahu as Likud leader, toured the al-Aqsa/Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem on 28 September. Sharon's critics saw it as a highly provocative move. Palestinian demonstrations followed, quickly developing into what became known as the al-Aqsa intifada, or uprising.

- **2001, Sharon returns:** By the end of 2000 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak found himself presiding over an increasingly bitter and bloody cycle of violence as the intifada raged against Israel's occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. With his coalition collapsing around him, Barak resigned as prime minister on 10 December to "seek a new mandate" to deal with the crisis. However in elections on 6 February, Ariel Sharon was swept to power by an Israeli electorate that had overwhelmingly turned its back on the land-for-peace formulas of the 1990s and now favoured a tougher approach to Israel's "Palestinian problem". The death toll soared as Sharon intensified existing policies such as assassinating Palestinian militants, air strikes and incursions into Palestinian self-rule areas. Palestinian militants, meanwhile, stepped up suicide bomb attacks in Israeli cities. The US spearheaded international efforts to calm the violence. Envoy George Mitchell led an inquiry into the uprising, while CIA director George Tenet negotiated a ceasefire - but neither initiative broke the cycle of bloodshed.
- **2002, West bank re-occupied:** Palestinian militants carried out an intense campaign of attacks in the first three months of the year, including a hotel bombing which killed 29 on the eve of the Jewish Passover holiday. In response, Israel besieged Yasser Arafat in his Ramallah compound for five weeks and sent tanks and thousands of troops to re-occupy almost all of the West Bank. Months of curfews and closures followed as Israel carried out operations it said were aimed at destroying the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure. Controversy raged as Israeli forces entered and captured the West Bank city of Jenin in April. A UN report later refuted Palestinian claims of a massacre, but Amnesty International concluded that the Israeli army had committed war crimes in Jenin and also Nablus. May saw a five-week stand-off between the Israeli army and a large group of militants and civilians sheltering inside Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. In June, US President George Bush called for Palestinians to replace their leader with one not "compromised by terror", and outlined a timetable for negotiations which would later become the plan known as the "roadmap". Israel began building a barrier in the West Bank, which it said was to prevent attacks inside Israel, although Palestinians feared an attempt to annex land. Mr Arafat faced heavy pressure to reform the Palestinian Authority and rein in the militants. Palestinian attacks continued, met with periodic Israeli incursions and a ten-day siege which reduced much of Mr Arafat's compound to rubble.
- **2003, Road map hopes:** After several Palestinian attacks in January, Israel stepped up operations against Hamas, killing the militant group's founder. With the US and Israel continuing to refuse to deal directly with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader appointed Mahmoud Abbas as his prime minister. In late April, the US published the much-delayed roadmap, which outlined a step-by-step timetable towards a negotiated Palestinian state, with the first phase contingent on an end to Palestinian violence and Israeli incursions and settlement activity. In May, the Israeli cabinet endorsed the plan, though it put on record several reservations. At a summit with the US president in Aqaba, Jordan, in June, Mr Abbas called for an end to the armed intifada, while Israeli President Ariel Sharon declared his support for the creation of a "democratic Palestinian state at peace with Israel". Further negotiations led to pull-backs of Israeli forces in Gaza and Bethlehem. Mr Abbas secured a temporary cessation of violence from Palestinian militant groups. In August, after seven weeks of relative calm, the truce disintegrated with a spate of tit-for-tat Palestinian suicide bombings, Israeli raids and targeted killings. After a long-running power struggle with Mr Arafat over control of the Palestinian security apparatus, Mr Abbas resigned in early September. He was replaced by Arafat loyalist Ahmed Qurei. Construction of the West Bank barrier continued throughout the year despite growing international criticism.

The Israeli cabinet voted to "remove" Mr Arafat and in December Mr Sharon told the Palestinians he would implement a policy of unilateral separation unless they halted violence.

- **2004, Arafat dies:** Palestinian suicide bombings and Israeli air strikes continued. Israel provoked outrage among Palestinians by killing Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in a targeted missile attack in March. A second senior leader, Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, was killed a month later. In April Ariel Sharon revealed a "disengagement plan" which included the withdrawal of all 8,000 settlers and the troops that protect them in the Gaza Strip, and from three small settlements in the northern West Bank. Construction of the West Bank barrier continued, despite increasing protests and changes to the route in response to a verdict in the Israeli High Court. In July, the International Court of Justice in The Hague pronounced the barrier illegal, but Israel dismissed the non-binding ruling. Intra-Palestinian political turmoil broke out over the summer as Yasser Arafat, Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and various Palestinian factions battled over reform of the security forces. After three bombings in August and September and numerous Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli towns, Israel launched a major and bloody incursion into northern Gaza. In late October Arafat was taken ill and flown to France for emergency treatment. He died of a mysterious blood disorder on 11 November. The news was met with an outpouring of grief among Palestinians. Emotional crowds engulfed Mr Arafat's compound in Ramallah as his body arrived by helicopter to be buried. Mahmoud Abbas, who had spent a brief spell as prime minister in 2002, was confirmed as Arafat's successor as chairman of the PLO.
- **2005, Gaza pullout:** Mahmoud Abbas was elected president of the Palestinian Authority after a landslide victory in January elections. But post-election attacks by Palestinian militants immediately threatened to derail hopes for renewed peace talks. However, Mr Abbas deployed Palestinian police in northern Gaza and by February had persuaded Hamas and Islamic Jihad to begin a temporary, unofficial cessation of violence. Mr Abbas and Mr Sharon went on to announce a mutual ceasefire at a summit in Egypt, although the militant groups stopped short of making their fragile truce official. Preparations for Ariel Sharon's planned pullout from the Gaza Strip continued, with the Israeli Prime Minister securing cabinet backing and fending off calls for a referendum from opponents. Despite widespread protests by settlers, the withdrawal went ahead in late August and early September, with emotional scenes as Israeli troops removed some settlers by force.
- **2011, failed Palestinian bid for statehood:** On September 23 President Abbas applied for full UN membership for the state of Palestine. Israel and the United States opposed the bid because they claimed it was aimed at de-legitimizing Israel.
- **2012, conflict flares up: November 14:** Operation Pillar of Defence – Hamas military chief, Ahmed Jabari, is killed in a targeted air strike carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces and the Shin Bet. A series of other explosions shake Gaza, killing ten civilians and wounding 40. **November 15:** Operation Pillar of Defence: three Israeli civilians are killed in Kiryat Malachi, Israel, in a rocket attack on southern Israel from Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Rockets hit apartment buildings, schools and private houses. Two rockets are fired from the Gaza Strip at Tel Aviv, with one landing in the sea and one hitting an uninhabited area in the city's suburbs.

Iranian backed Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the incident, which was the first attack against the city since the 1991 Gulf War. **November 16:** Operation Pillar of Defense: Palestinian militants fired a rocket aimed at Jerusalem setting off air raid sirens in the city. **November 19:** The number of Palestinians killed in Gaza during Israel's offensive reaches 100 (including 24 children and 10 women) and the number wounded is recorded at 850 (including 260 children and 140 women). Israel puts its death toll at three (two men and one woman) and the number of civilians wounded at 60. **November 21:** Operation Pillar of Defense: A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, announced by Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mohamed Kamel Amr and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, comes into effect at 7:00pm local time.

- **November 2012, Palestinian bid for statehood:** France, Portugal, Russia and Spain say they will back the Palestinian bid for full UN membership. Germany has ruled out its support and the UK says its support is contingent on Palestinian redrafting of the resolution to guarantee the restart of talks without preconditions, that the International Criminal Court will not be called in to adjudicate on activities in the occupied territories and that nothing in the resolution prejudices deliberations by the UN's Security Council. Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz announced publicly that "surprises" were in store for the Palestinians if they proceeded with the move.
- **29 November 2012:** Palestine attains the status of a permanent observer state at the UN – Israel and the United States voted against the resolution.
- **30 November 2012:** Israel approves the construction of 3,000 new homes in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. The Prime Minister's office would not comment on whether the announcement was punishment for the UN vote.

# Syria

### 3. Syria

#### 3.1 Timeline of events:

**2000:** Hafez al-Assad dies and is succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad.

**April 2001:** Outlawed Muslim Brotherhood says it will resume political activity, 20 years after its leaders were forced to flee.

**November 2001:** British PM Tony Blair visits to try shore up support for the campaign against terror. He and President Assad fail to agree on a definition of terrorism.

**May 2002:** Senior US official includes Syria in a list of states that make-up an "axis of evil", first listed by President Bush in January. Undersecretary for State John Bolton says Damascus is acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

**April 2003:** US threatens sanctions if Damascus fails to take what Washington calls the "right decisions". Syria denies US allegations that it is developing chemical weapons and helping fugitive Iraqis.

**May 2004:** US imposes economic sanctions on Syria over what it calls its support for terrorism and failure to stop militants entering Iraq.

**March 2007:** European Union relaunches dialogue with Syria.

**April 2007:** US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi meets President Assad in Damascus. She is the highest-placed US politician to visit Syria in recent years. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meets Foreign Minister Walid Muallem the following month in the first contact at this level for two years.

**July 2008:** President Assad meets French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. The visit signals the end of the diplomatic isolation by the West that followed the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri in 2005. While in Paris, President Assad also meets the recently-elected Lebanese president, Michel Suleiman. The two men agree to work towards the establishing of full diplomatic relations between their countries.

**October 2008:** Syria establishes diplomatic relations with Lebanon for first time since both countries established independence in 1940s.

**February 2010:** US posts first ambassador to Syria after a five-year break.

**May 2010:** US renews sanctions against Syria, saying that it supports terrorist groups, seeks weapons of mass destruction and has provided Lebanon's Hezbollah with Scud missiles in violation of UN resolutions.

**March 15, 2011:** "Day of Dignity" protests begin in Damascus, demanding the release of political prisoners. At least 35 people are arrested. Simultaneous demonstrations take place in cities including al-Hassake, Deraa, Deir al-Zor and Hama.

**March 16, 2011:** Security forces break up a silent gathering in Marjeh square in Damascus of about 150 protesters who hold up pictures of imprisoned relatives and friends. Witnesses say at least 30 people are arrested.

**March 18, 2011:** Security forces shoot a number of people dead in Deraa, as thousands of people take to the street calling for freedom while accusing Assad's family of corruption. The crackdown triggers days of protests and more civilian deaths.

**March 20, 2011:** Activists say tens of people have been killed in Deraa in less than a week. Crowds there set fire to the headquarters of the ruling Baath Party.

**March 23, 2011:** A week into the protests, Assad sacks the governor of Deraa as activists report the death of at least 100 people in the province. Syrian forces reportedly kill six people in an attack on protesters in the Omari mosque complex in Deraa, and later open fire on hundreds of youths marching in solidarity. An official statement says later that Assad has sacked Faisal Kalthoum as governor of Deraa.

**March 29, 2011:** The government resigns.

**March 30, 2011:** Assad delivers a speech for the first time since the protests began. He blames foreign conspirators for the unrest but declines to elaborate on major reforms.

**April 6, 2011:** The president announces decisions to close the country's only casino and to scrap a ruling that banned teachers from wearing the niqab.

**April 7, 2011:** Assad issues a decree granting nationality to thousands of Kurds.

**April 16, 2011:** After swearing in a new cabinet, Assad gives a televised address for the second time since protests began, pledging further reforms.

**April 21, 2011:** Assad issues decrees to end nearly five decades of emergency law and to abolish much-criticised security courts.

**April 22, 2011:** The country experiences its bloodiest day since the uprising began, as tens of thousands took to the streets in Deraa, Damascus and several other cities. Activists report that security forces killed at least 100 people.

**April 25, 2011:** Syrian troops backed by tanks begin an 11-day siege of Deraa.

**April 28, 2011:** Footage emerges on the internet of the body of 13-year-old Hamza al-Khateeb, who opposition activists allege was tortured and killed in custody. Shocked by the footage, thousands of people show their support for Hamza online and in street protests. He becomes the new symbol of the Syrian revolution for many activists.

**April 29, 2011:** The US decides to impose new sanctions on Syria's intelligence agency and two relatives of Assad.

**May 10, 2011:** The EU puts the names of 13 Syrian officials, including Assad's brother Maher, on its sanctions list.

**June 6, 2011:** Syrian state television reports that 120 soldiers were killed in an ambush by "armed gangs" in the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour. However, residents claim the soldiers were executed by security forces for refusing to fire on protesters.

**June 12, 2011:** Armed forces take control of Jisr al-Shughour as thousands of residents flee to Turkey. More than 12,000 people flee to neighbouring Turkey in the following week.

**June 19, 2011:** In his third speech since protests began, Assad pledges to pursue a national dialogue on reform. He says dialogue could lead to a new constitution and even end his Baath party's monopoly on power, but refuses to reform Syria amid "chaos".

**June 29, 2011:** At least 500,000 people protest in the central city of Hama. Activists say it was the single largest rally since the uprising began.

**July 18, 2011:** Qatar closes its embassy in Damascus after it is attacked by Assad loyalists.

**July 31, 2011:** Security forces reportedly kill nearly 140 people, including 100 when the army storms Hama to crush dissent on the eve of Ramadan.

**Aug 3, 2011:** The UN Security Council condemns the crackdown in a statement.

**Aug 4, 2011:** Assad issues a decree authorising political parties.

**Aug 7, 2011:** The Arab League condemns the actions of the Syrian government for the first time. Saudi Arabia recalls its ambassador from Damascus, followed by Kuwait and Bahrain.

**Aug 18, 2011:** US President Barack Obama and the EU call on Assad to step down.

**Aug 21, 2011:** Assad warns against foreign military intervention in his country in an interview broadcast on state TV, saying: "Any action against Syria will have greater consequences [on those who carry it out], greater than they can tolerate".

**Aug 27, 2011:** Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo urge the Syrian government to follow the path of reason before it is too late.

**Sep 2, 2011:** The EU adopts a ban on crude oil imports from Syria.

**Sep 9, 2011:** Syrians dedicate Friday protests to calling for international protection from security forces for the first time since the uprising began.

**Sep 10, 2011:** Nabil ElAraby, the head of the Arab League, says he has reached an "agreement on reforms" in Syria following talks with Assad.

**Sep 15, 2011:** A group of Syrian activists form a Syrian National Council in Istanbul, Turkey, representing a united front in opposition to the Syrian government.

**Sep 29, 2011:** Syria accuses the US of inciting violence against its security forces and says it will confront what it described as attempts to interfere in its domestic affairs.

**Oct 4, 2011:** Russia and China join forces and veto a European-drafted UN Security Council resolution condemning Syria.

**Oct 7, 2011:** Syria says that a national investigation is under way into killings, including those of 1,100 security forces, but denies allegations that loyalist forces had shot soldiers refusing to fire on protesters.

**Nov 14, 2011:** Jordan's King Abdullah becomes the first Arab head of state to urge Assad to quit after ensuring a smooth handover.

**Nov 16, 2011:** Army defectors attacked an intelligence complex in the Damascus suburbs in what appears to be one of their boldest assaults so far against government security forces.

**Nov 19, 2011:** Assad vows to pursue a crackdown on protests demanding his removal and says there will be parliamentary elections in February or March.

**Nov 21, 2011:** The UN General Assembly's Human Rights Committee condemns Syria for the crackdown, with 122 votes in favour, 13 against and 41 abstentions.

**Nov 27, 2011:** The Arab League agrees to impose economic sanctions on Syria.

**Dec 12, 2011:** Syria holds local elections as part of what it says is a reform process.

**Dec 19, 2011:** Syria signs the Arab League peace plan aimed at ending violence, agreeing to let observers into the country. A two-day military campaign begins in the Jabal al-Zawiyah area in Idlib, killing at least 200 people, activists say.

**Dec 23, 2011:** Twin bombs aimed at two security buildings strike Damascus killing 44 people, according to officials. The authorities say al-Qaeda was behind the attacks. Opposition members suspect the government carried out the bombings itself.

**Jan 10, 2012:** Assad says he will not stand down, and vows to restore order by "hitting terrorists with an iron fist".

**Jan 22, 2012:** The Arab League urges Assad to step down and hand over power to a deputy, a call Syria rejects a day later.

**Jan 24, 2012:** The Gulf Cooperation Council says it is withdrawing its 55 monitors from the 165-strong observer mission, while Syria agrees to extend the Arab mission for a month.

**Jan 28, 2012:** The Arab League suspends its monitoring mission due to "critical" deteriorating conditions and rising violence in Syria.

**Jan 31, 2012:** The Arab League asks the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution based on the league's action plan for Syria, which includes a call for Assad to step down.

**Feb 4, 2012:** Russia and China veto a UN Security Council resolution on the violence in Syria.

**Feb 7, 2012:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov holds talks with Assad in Damascus.

**Feb 10, 2012:** Syrian state media says dozens are killed in explosions targeting the military intelligence building and security forces headquarters in Aleppo. The government blames "terrorists" for the attacks.

**Feb 16, 2012:** The UN General Assembly passes a non-binding resolution condemning the violence in Syria.

**Feb 18, 2012:** Activists say security forces open fire in Mazzeh, Damascus, as thousands of people join a funeral march for slain protesters.

**Feb 22, 2012:** Sunday Times reporter Marie Colvin and photojournalist Remi Ochlik are reported killed in shelling in Homs' Bab Amr neighbourhood.

**Feb 26, 2012:** Syrians vote on a draft constitution that could end five decades of one-party rule. The opposition calls for a boycott of the referendum.

**March 7, 2012:** UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos arrives in Damascus for talks with senior government officials.

**March 10, 2012:** Kofi Annan, the UN-Arab League envoy to Syria, meets Assad in Damascus in an attempt to find a political solution to the crisis.

**March 21, 2012:** The United Nations Security Council has adopted a statement backing joint UN-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan's plan for ending the violence in Syria.

**March 23, 2012:** Diplomatic sources say President Assad's wife, mother, sister and sister-in-law have all been included on the EU's sanction list.

**March 27, 2012:** A UN spokesman says the Syrian government has agreed to accept the six-point plan by Kofi Annan on ending the violence.

**March 31, 2012:** Syria says it has defeated those seeking to bring it down, but shelling of opposition areas continues.

**April 10, 2012:** Syria fails to meet the deadline to withdraw troops from residential areas.

**April 12, 2012:** A UN-backed ceasefire takes effect. Both the opposition and the government report violations, but the situation on the ground is relatively calm.

**April 14, 2012:** The UN Security Council agrees to send an advance team of observers to oversee Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan.

**April 19, 2012:** The 14-nation "Friends of Syria" group meets in Paris, and calls on Syrian authorities to end all violence immediately and says it will work to ensure the success of Annan's plan.

**April 21, 2012:** The UN Security Council adopts a resolution that authorises the deployment of up to 300 observers to Syria for three months to monitor a ceasefire described as "incomplete".

**April 25, 2012:** Up to 69 people, many of them children, are reported dead in a rocket attack on building in the city of Hama.

**May 3, 2012:** Activists say four students are killed, several injured, and 200 others arrested after security forces and students armed with knives attacked a protest march at Aleppo University.

**May 7, 2012:** Authorities say voters turn out in large numbers for parliamentary elections. The opposition denounces the exercise as a sham.

**May 9, 2012:** A roadside bomb explodes as a convoy escorting UN observers is driving into the city of Deraa. Six members of the troop escort are wounded.

**May 25, 2012:** Scores of people are killed in the town of Houla, in Homs province. UN observers touring the area say 92 people, including more than 30 children, died in the assault.

**June 6, 2012:** President Assad names former agriculture minister Riyad Hijab as prime minister to form a new government.

**June 12, 2012:** The head of the United Nations' peacekeeping operations has says the situation in Syria amounts to a full-scale civil war.

**June 22, 2012:** Syrian troops shoot down a Turkish warplane. Damascus says it was self-defence, Ankara calls it an "act of aggression".

**June 26, 2012:** Assad says his country is "at war".

**June 30, 2012:** World powers meet in Geneva and agree Syria should have a transitional government but appear at odds over Assad's role.

**July 6, 2012:** Brigadier-General ManafTlas, who headed a unit of Syria's Republican Guard and was a longtime ally of Assad, defects. "Friends of Syria" meet in Paris and agree to increase aid to Syrian rebels.

**July 11, 2012:** Nawaf al-Fares, Syria's ambassador to Iraq, defects and joins the opposition.

**July 12, 2012:** Activists say 100-200 people are killed in the village of Tremseh. UN observers later say the attack appeared to target rebels and activists.

**July 18, 2012:** State media say Defence Minister General Rajha and his deputy, AssefShawkat, the brother-in-law of President Bashar al-Assad, are among those killed after an explosion struck the National Security building in Damascus.

**Aug 1, 2012:** A video emerges which appears to show rebels executing regime loyalists in Aleppo. The narrator in the video says the men are from the Berri clan, whom rebels accuse of murder.

**Aug 2, 2012:** Kofi Annan quits as special envoy to Syria.

**Aug 3, 2012:** The UN General Assembly votes to condemn the Syrian government and demand a political transition in Syria. The non-binding resolution is approved, with 133 votes in favour, 12 against and 31 abstentions. Activists report the deaths of at least 72 people "in a government massacre" in the Hama neighbourhood of Arbaeen.

**Aug 6, 2012:** Prime Minister Riad Hijab defects to the opposition. Syrian state television says Omar Ibrahim Ghalawanji, who had been a deputy prime minister, was appointed to lead temporary caretaker government.

**Aug 11, 2012:** Syrian and Jordanian forces clash in border area after Syrian soldiers fired on refugees leaving the country.

**Aug 14, 2012:** Riad Hijab, Syria's former prime minister, says Assad controlled only 30 per cent of Syria.

**Aug 15, 2012:** The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation suspends Syria's membership at a summit of Muslim leaders in Mecca citing Assad's violent suppression of the revolt.

**Aug 16, 2012:** Activists say at least 60 bodies were found summarily executed in the town of Qatana in the suburbs of Damascus.

**Aug 17, 2012:** Veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi is the new UN-Arab League envoy for Syria.



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