

## **Arafat: The Man, the Myth a Legend**

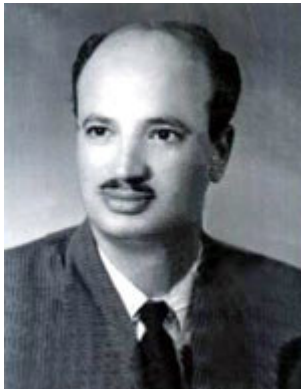
### **Chronology, Pictures and Quotes**

**In 1929-** Mohammad AbdelRauf Arafat AlQidwa AlHussieni was born in Gaza to a well-off merchant family. Biographies say he was born in Cairo, Arafat claims he was born in Jerusalem on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

**In 1948-** As Britain withdrew from Palestine Mandate, Arafat took part in defending the land from the Israeli army which marched on to occupy 78% of historical Palestine, depopulating and razing over 400 Palestinian villages and creating the refugee problem through the displacement of 800,000 Palestinians.

**In 1952-** Arafat was an engineering student at Cairo University. Arafat joined the Palestinian Students League after Egyptian colonel Jamal Abdel Nasser seizes power. He then formed the Palestinian Graduate Association.

**In 1958-** Following his graduation with an engineering degree Arafat moves to Kuwait and works using his degree. While there, he and a small group of Palestinian refugees formed Fatah, a secular movement advocating the liberation of Palestine. In 1964 the Palestinian Liberation Organization PLO was established. In 1965 Fatah Offices were created throughout the Arab world in order to expand the scope and interest of revolutionary ideas.



Yasser Arafat 1964

**In 1967-** Israel occupied the West Bank including east Jerusalem as well as Gaza, Sinai and the Golan Heights; this sparked more Palestinian resistance groups who got a new understanding of the Zionist agenda of annexation and expansion. In 1968 Palestinian resistance fighters triumph in a battle, AlKarameh, for the first time with the Israeli army forcing Israel to withdraw, in light of this victory Arafat affiliates Fatah with the PLO.



Yasser Arafat in 1968

**Arafat in 1968:** *"Zionism is an embodiment of neo-Nazism..., intellectual terrorism and racial exploitation."*

**In 1969-** Arafat was elected President of the Palestinian Liberation Organization PLO

**Arafat in 1969:** *"We do not have an ideology. Our goal is the liberation of our fatherland by any means necessary."*

**In 1970-** Thousands of Palestinian civilians were slaughtered in Jordan's crackdown, what became known as "Black September." The PLO was expelled from Jordan. Lebanon already swamped in a civil strife between its various sects and factions, was hardly ready for another formidable force that, in addition to its political influence, altered the fractious ethnic set-up of the country. Palestinian factions quickly found themselves involved in a deadly civil war, which compelled the forging of alliances. PLO fighters moved to Lebanon and established fairly strong bases.

**In 1974-** The Arab Summit in Morocco recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The United Nations invited Arafat to address the General Assembly as they recognized Palestine as an entity with observer status.



Arafat at UNGA 1974

**Arafat addressing the UNGA:** *"I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hands."*

**In 1978-** Israel conducted a small-scale invasion against Lebanon and occupied a small part of the country.

**In 1982-** Israel carried out a full-scale invasion with the declared aim of driving away Palestinian freedom fighters, Israeli troops pushed on into Beirut and the PLO was forced to evacuate its fighters.



Arafat 1970s



Arafat in 1982



Arafat in 1984



Arafat in 1985

**Arafat in 1980:** *"I am with the current of history and those with the current of history will win. Those against it will vanish."*

**In 1983-** Arafat and the PLO headquarters headed to Tunisia. Leadership members settled in Tunisia and Syria while fighters found themselves scattered all over the Middle East.

**In 1987-** Palestinians in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and Gaza launched an uprising against the Israeli occupation. Arafat associates himself with the "Intifada"

**Arafat in 1988:** *"Neither (I) nor anyone for that matter can stop the Intifada... The Intifada will come to an end only when practical and tangible steps have been taken towards the achievement of our national aims."*

**In 1988-** Arafat reads declaration of independence for state. He rejects all forms of terrorism. He again addresses the UNGA and accepts Israel's right to exist.



Arafat in at UN in 1988

**Arafat to the UNGA in 1988:** *“(We accept) the right of all parties concerned with the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, including – as I said – the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbors in accordance with (U.N.) resolution 242 and 338... We totally and categorically reject all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state.”*

**In 1991-** Under US and Soviet auspices, Middle East peace conference is held in Madrid.

**Arafat on pressing Israel to agree to trade occupied land for peace:** *“We are not asking for the moon.”*

**In 1992-** Arafat survives a plane crash in sandstorm in Libya desert. Three crew members were killed in the crash.

**In 1993-** at the White House, Arafat and Israeli PM Rabin make a historic handshake, sealing outline for limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza under interim peace accord secretly negotiated in Oslo, Norway.



Arafat and Rabin historical handshake in 1993 at the White House

**Arafat:** *“Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the right of their neighbors or infringe on their security. Rather, putting an end to their feelings of being wronged and having suffered a historic injustice is the strongest guarantee to achieve coexistence and openness between out*

*two peoples and future generations. Our two peoples are awaiting today this historic hope, and they want to give peace a real chance."*

**In 1994-** Arafat returns in triumph to Gaza and takes over as President of Palestinian National Authority. In 1995 in Washington, Arafat and Rabin sign interim agreement setting stage for Israeli 'redeployment' in the West Bank. Both Arafat and Rabin were awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in Middle East peacemaking. Also in 1995, Arafat's peace partner Rabin was assassinated by a terrorist Israeli Jewish settler.

***Arafat on Rabin's assassination:*** *"I am very sad and very shocked for this awful and terrible crime against one of the brave leaders of Israel and the peacemakers."*

**In 1996-** Arafat was elected as Palestinian National Authority's President in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and Gaza elections. He was elected by a majority of 83%. Arafat launched a crackdown on Hamas and Islamic Jihad after a wave of suicide attacks. Israelis elect right-wing extremist Benjamin Netanyahu as their PM, a man who has opposed peace and indirectly advocated Rabin's assassination.

***Arafat after 1996 elections in Israel:*** *"The Israeli people have voted against peace. They want peace with the Jordanians, they want peace with Egyptians but they don't want peace with Palestinians."*

**In 1997-** Palestinians sign a deal with Government of right wing PM Benjamin Netanyahu for long delayed handover of most of Hebron. After that agreement peacemaking grinds to a halt.



Arafat and Netanyahu meet at the Erez checkpoint between Israel and the Gaza Strip (wtn)

***Arafat in 1997:*** *"With Rabin I started the peace of the brave and many things were going smoothly, according to what had been agreed upon. But this government, until now, is not respecting the implementation of what has been signed." – "We say that there can be no peace without Jerusalem and no peace with (Jewish colonies) settlements."*

**In 1998-** Arafat and Netanyahu Sign Wye River deal for phased Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank. Netanyahu freezes it after two months, as he faced pressure from settlers and right wing members of his party.

**In 1999-** Arafat signs deal with Israeli PM Barak setting September 2000, deadline for final peace treaty.



Arafat in 2000 with Clinton and Barak



Pope Visits Arafat and Palestinians in 2000

**In 2000-** The whole peace process hit a snag when it reached the ‘final status’ negotiation phase, which deals with fundamental issues such as Jerusalem, refugees’ right to return, illegal settlements, borders and water. Palestinians responded angrily to the stale-mate in negotiations which brought to a complete stop their efforts to achieve independence and statehood, as they watched illegal settlements double in size and numbers between 1995 and 2000. The second Intifada was sparked after then opposition leader Ariel Sharon’s incursion into Al-Aqsa Mosque, a Muslim Jerusalem Holy site.

**In 2001-** Arafat’s old foe Sharon elected Israeli Prime Minister.

**In 2002-** Israel declared Arafat “irrelevant” to the peace process and placed him under virtual house arrest at his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah. Arafat’s compound was frequently bombed and his office was targeted by Israeli tanks on several occasions. Israeli troops had flattened every main building around Arafat with explosives, tanks and bulldozers. Since his confinement, Israel has pondered three options, to capture, deport or kill the Palestinian leader.

***Arafat under siege in 2002: “they want me a captive, a deportee or dead, but I tell them I want to die (killed) a martyr”***

***Arafat in 2003 on possibility of dying under siege: “I am a Palestinian soldier ... I will use my gun to defend not only myself but also defend every Palestinian child, woman and man and to defend the Palestinian existence.”***





Arafat under siege in 2002



2003

**In 2003-** Arafat appoints a Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas and after Abbas's resignation he appoints Ahmad Qurei as the Palestinian Prime Minister, to cede some of his power. Under Arafat's leadership, the Palestinian National Authority endorses the 'roadmap' American drafted peace plan.

**In 2004-** As anti-corruption reforms are taking place under Arafat's leadership, with elections set for June 2005, Arafat falls ill with stomach ailment. On October 29<sup>th</sup> he is airlifted to France for treatment.

***On being airlifted in stretcher to France for urgent medical care after 2- 2.5 years of confinement by the Israeli army to Ramallah headquarters in the West Bank:***

***"God willing I will come back."***



Arafat waves goodbye and is accompanied by his wife Suha as he is airlifted to a hospital in France

**Yasser Arafat (Abu Amar) is a historical figure not just on the national level but in the international arena. He is a survivor and a symbol of resistance and dedication to a cause. He has affirmed the Palestinians place in history and on the political map of the Middle East. This perception has renewed the leader's role as a Palestinian symbol for all, even to those who strongly disagree with his political policies and approach.**

***Sources: Reuters and Al Jazeera.***