

Division for Palestinian Rights  
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the  
 Question of Palestine**  
 Monthly media monitoring review  
 August 2006

**Monthly highlights**

- IDF arrests Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik in Ramallah. ([5 August](#))
- Palestinian Authority (PA) Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer is detained by Israeli troops. ([19 August](#))

**1**

The following is an [excerpt](#) from the conclusions of a meeting of the Council of the European Union held in Brussels: “The Council deplores the continuing violence in Gaza and the West Bank that has led to an equally distressing humanitarian situation. The Council reiterates its call for the parties to return to the peace process on the basis of the [Road Map](#). An unequivocal commitment by all parties to a viable independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours is a key to stability and security in the whole region”. (<http://europa.eu>)

**2**

A six-year-old Palestinian boy and his four-year-old sister were slightly wounded by shrapnel when Israeli artillery shells hit Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (*Wafa*)

United Nations Spokesman on the Middle East Ahmad Fawzi said during a daily press briefing by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General: “The situation in Gaza remains tense. There’ve been a significant number of artillery shells fired by the Israel Defence Forces into Gaza.

In the last week, the number is at least 1,050. We’re very concerned, we remain concerned about the threat this poses to civilians and civilian infrastructure. The IDF shelling of the northern Gaza Strip continues to bring more fatalities and increased internal displacement. In the latest round of violence, a 24-year-old woman and a 14-year-old boy were killed east of Beit Lahia by an artillery shell.” (*UN News Centre*)

Morocco sent to the Palestinian people a second shipment of 135 tons of food. (*Maghreb Arabe Presse*)

**3**

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians and wounded four others during a search campaign in Hebron. (*Wafa*)

The IDF arrested Ziyad Abu-Diyad, a prominent leader of Hamas, at his home in the West Bank city of Al-Bireh. Mr. Abu-Diyad was involved in the National Dialogue Conference on the Prisoners’ Document. (*BBC*)

The armed wing of Islamic Jihad, the Saraya Al-Quds Brigades, claimed that it had launched two home-made rockets into the southern Israeli city of Sderot. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli troops raided the southern Gaza Strip, killing at least eight Palestinians, including four militants and an eight-year-old boy, Palestinian officials said. About 50 tanks pushed into an area near the Gaza-Egypt border before dawn, taking up positions near long-closed Gaza airport, residents and Palestinian security officials said. The forces advanced about five miles, the farthest since the offensive started in late June, blocking a main highway and the eastern entrance to Rafah. As the tanks took up positions, Israeli aircraft fired missiles at four groups of gunmen, killing four.

Twenty-six Palestinians were wounded in the air strikes, at least 10 of them militants, security and hospital officials said. Later, forces fired a tank shell at residents gathering in the area after daybreak, killing the eight-year-old boy and wounding three people, according to hospital and security officials. Three more bodies were brought to the hospital, but they were not believed to be militants, medics said. (*AP*)

Egypt had resumed its efforts to persuade the Palestinians to release kidnapped Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, amid unconfirmed reports that Israel had agreed to release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Former PA Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Sha’ath claimed that Israel had expressed its readiness to release some 700 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Cpl. Shalit. Mr. Sha’ath also said the Palestinians and Israel had agreed on most of the details of the alleged prisoner swap but were still negotiating over whom would be freed. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

At an emergency meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Putrajaya, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia the current chair of the OIC, said, “What is happening to Lebanon and Palestine cannot be tolerated... Clearly, Israel has bigger objectives other than freeing their captured soldiers. Clearly, Israel is being supported by some others in pursuing their secret design.” He urged the Islamic leaders to play “a more proactive role” in the crisis by contributing forces for peacekeeping efforts. The leaders were due later to release a statement calling for “an unconditional ceasefire” and demand that a UN peacekeeping force, including participation from Islamic nations, be immediately deployed to Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas met with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, in Amman. Following the meeting, President Abbas told reporters that there were Arab efforts and meetings to pave the way for convening an international conference to solve

problems in the region. ( *Wafa* )

In a [statement](#), United Nations humanitarian agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory said they “are deeply alarmed by the impact the continuing violence is having on civilians and civilian structures in Gaza, which has resulted in a sharp decline in the humanitarian situation facing 1.4 million people, more than half of them children”. ( *UN News Centre* )

4

Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in separate incidents before daybreak. Hamas said two of the casualties were Hamas members. Israeli forces conducted house-to-house searches in the southern Gaza Strip early in the morning and killed four Palestinians, including a baby girl. They arrested 12 Palestinians and injured 26 others. An Israeli aircraft also hit two houses in Gaza City with missiles. ( *AP, BBC, Ha'aretz* ) Palestinian gunmen, dressed in police uniforms, broke into a prison in Jericho and killed six Palestinian inmates jailed on suspicion of collaborating with Israel, wounding several other inmates. ( *DPA, Reuters* )

Muhammad Nazal, Hamas media consultant and a member of its Political Bureau, said that there had been contact between Israel and Egypt regarding the possibility of securing the return of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, through a prisoner exchange. “Pursuant to the visit of senior Hamas officials to Cairo, Egyptian sources renewed negotiations efforts that had been halted due to the stubbornness of Israelis, who wanted to secure the soldier’s release in exchange for nothing”. In an interview, Mr. Nazal said, “There is no coordination with Hezbollah and the current trend is to separate between the two channels.” ( *YNetnews* )

Border Police searched the homes of Israeli Arabs in Umm al-Fahm without search warrants looking for Palestinians workers staying in Israel illegally. The operation lasted for several hours. Border Police representatives said the IDF and Border Police troops identified three Palestinians crossing the wall into Israel, near Umm al-Fahm, in the morning and arrested them. ( *Ha'aretz* )

King Abdullah II of Jordan told reporters that he was enraged by the war and that the continued fighting only weakened the voices of Middle East moderates. He stressed Israel’s attempt to destroy Hezbollah would not resolve the problem in the region and the only way to achieve peace was to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. The King said that the United States and Israel should acknowledge that war would not bring anything but more problems, violence and extremism to the Middle East. ( *BBC* )

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said he had recalled his country’s ambassador to Israel to protest Israeli bombings and attacks on Lebanon and against the Palestinian people. Mr. Chavez said, “The US has prevented the Security Council from taking any action to stop Israel’s genocide against the people of Palestine and Lebanon”. ( *AFP* )

5

The IDF arrested Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik in Ramallah. ( *AP* )

Two Palestinian teenagers and two armed militants belonging to Islamic Jihad and Hamas were killed by Israeli fire during an IDF incursion into Rafah. The mother of the teenagers and another family member were in critical condition after being wounded in the strike, hospital officials said. ( *AFP* )

A 65-year-old Palestinian, wounded during an Israeli attack on the PA Foreign Ministry on 13 July, died of his wounds, a hospital source said. ( *AFP* )

The Palestinians holding the IDF soldier had refused to allow the Red Cross to visit him, a Red Cross official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. ( *AFP* )

Moussa Abu Marzouq, Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief, told *AP* that Egypt had put forth “many ideas” for resolving the abducted IDF soldier issue “but so far there is nothing that could be a framework to get out of the crisis. The exchange of prisoners is not coming soon.” ( *AP* )

In a written statement, Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair cautioned that world leaders “cannot and must not lose sight of the Palestinian dimension, which is the root cause of this conflict. I will work tirelessly to re-energize the Middle East peace process, which is the only way to provide a viable, long-term solution to this situation, with a Palestinian State alongside a secure Israel.” ( *AP* )

PA Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Awad said in an interview with Ramattan News Agency(*RNA*) that he expected the electricity grid in Rafah to be connected to Egyptian power stations within the next few days. ( [www.ramattan.com](http://www.ramattan.com) )

6

A Palestinian boy was killed and three adults wounded in an Israeli air strike in an eastern neighbourhood of Rafah, medics and witnesses reported. PA security sources said that IDF bulldozers, backed by tanks and armoured vehicles, had razed fruit trees and houses in an area near the Rafah Terminal. ( *DPA* )

PFLP General Command said one of its members had been killed and five wounded in Israeli attacks in Lebanon. ( *AP* )

An Islamic Jihad member was killed by Israeli forces near Jenin after he refused to surrender, PA security sources said. ( *AFP* )

IDF forces entered Ramallah and arrested Hamas PLC member Fadel Salah, PA security officials and witnesses said. ( *AP* )

IDF troops burned large areas of olive groves near Tulkarm. In the meantime, the PA Ministry of Agriculture announced that the losses of the Palestinian agricultural sector during the period 26 June to 30 July had amounted to some \$27 million as a result of Israeli actions. ( *Wafa* )

PA President Abbas denounced Israel’s arrest of the PLC speaker and called for an international conference to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More than 65 members of the PA Cabinet or legislature were in Israeli detention, Mr. Abbas said. “They [Israel] are trying to disrupt the work of the democratically elected Government and to force the Palestinians to surrender,” PA Prime Minister Haniyeh told reporters. Egypt’s Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement that the arrest was a “flagrant breach of international norms and contradicted all agreements signed between the Palestinians and Israel.” European Parliament President Josep Borrell said in a statement: “I firmly condemn this new act perpetrated against the Palestinian Legislative Council. In the name of the European Parliament, I demand that the Israeli authorities immediately release Mr. Dweik,” he continued. Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Mohammed Sobeih said Israel had violated the principles of democracy “to prove that it is a State which has no connection at all to democracy but masters the art of kidnapping, torture and terrorism.” ( *AFP, The Jerusalem Post, Xinhua* )

Venezuela’s President Chavez said in a TV address: “[Israel] is attacking, doing the same thing to the Palestinian and Lebanese people that they have criticized, and with reason, the Holocaust. But this is a new Holocaust.” ( *AP* )

7

Seven Palestinians were hospitalized in Ramallah after one of them opened a suspicious envelope addressed to PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, PA officials said. ( *AP* )

A Palestinian was killed and his 17-year-old son wounded near Qalqilya in an apparent drive-by shooting by Israeli settlers. ( *Ha'aretz, Wafa* )

IDF warplanes damaged a house in the Gaza Strip town of Beit Lahia, witnesses said. ( *Wafa* )

IDF soldiers arrested eight Palestinians in Hebron, Tubas and Nablus. ( *Wafa* )

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that the unemployment rate in the West Bank had dropped from 21.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2006 to 18 per cent in the second quarter, while in the Gaza Strip it had decreased slightly from 34.1 to 34 per cent. ( *Wafa* )

Abdel-Aziz Dweik, the 58-year-old PLC Speaker, who was arrested by Israeli forces in Ramallah on 5 August, was transferred to an Israeli hospital in Jerusalem on the previous day after he had been beaten by Israeli interrogators, Palestinian officials affirmed. PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called for the immediate release of Mr. Dweik. The Israeli army, however, denied the allegation that the Speaker had been beaten by its soldiers. Ghazi Hamad, Spokesman of the Hamas-led Cabinet, said that torturing Mr. Dweik was part of a long campaign of torture approved by the Israeli Government against the Palestinian people and its leadership. (*Xinhua*)

France condemned the arrest of PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik by Israel. French Foreign Ministry Spokesman Denis Simonneau said, "This arrest, which added to previous arrest of deputies and members of the Palestinian Government since June 29, is not likely to favour the appeasement of the current crisis. France reiterates its call for their release," said the spokesman. (*Xinhua*)

In a [report](#), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said the capacity of a wastewater treatment plant in the northern Gaza Strip had reached a "critical point", with sewage ponds threatening to flood nearby populated areas, potentially spreading disease. It also said that more than 70 per cent of the population was now reliant on emergency assistance to meet daily food needs, while prices of essential goods, such as wheat flour and sugar, had risen by between 15 per cent and 33 per cent since the beginning of the year. (*Reuters, [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)*)

8

The IDF wounded two Palestinians and arrested 15 others, including a woman, in Jenin, Bethlehem, Nablus and Salfit. (*Wafa*)

The IDF wounded a child in the Gaza Strip town of Beit Lahia, medical sources said. The boy, Majdi Abu Jarad, was hit by shrapnel when the IDF opened fire on Palestinians' homes. (*Wafa*)

Merlin medical relief reported that hospitals in the Gaza Strip have seen a significant increase in war casualties with severe injuries over the past month and were running out of medical supplies. After a recent attack in Gaza City, 75 per cent of war-wounded patients admitted at one hospital needed amputations. Doctors had been struggling with the lack of surgical instruments. Power supply was also a major constraint as the hospitals only received four hours of electricity a day. Hospitals in the Gaza Strip urgently needed specialist nurses to assist staff in intensive care units. (*[www.merlin.org.uk](http://www.merlin.org.uk)*)

PA Minister of Health Bassem Na'eem held the Israeli Government accountable for any deterioration in the health of PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik, who had been arrested a few days ago by Israel. Palestinian sources said that Mr. Dweik had been transferred to an Israeli hospital in Jerusalem after he was severely beaten by Israeli interrogators. Mr. Na'eem condemned the Israeli treatment of the PLC Speaker. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said Israel's arrest of PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik would not help free the Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian militants in June. The detention of Mr. Dweik "will not boost Israel's position in negotiations to release the Israeli soldier held in Gaza," Mr. Erakat told a news conference held in Ramallah. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli authorities stopped a Norwegian delegation from entering the Gaza Strip on security grounds, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Raymond Johansen said. Mr. Johansen, who was leading the delegation, said "We were simply told the situation [in Gaza] was too dangerous". He ruled out that the move could have been deliberate on the part of Israel to prevent the visit to an industrial area and a power station in the Gaza Strip. The eight-member delegation returned to Jerusalem, and will try to enter the region again on 10 August. (*AFP*)

Lab tests of a suspicious letter sent to the office of PA Prime Minister Haniyeh detected no known poisons, a senior PA official said. The letter that had a Tel Aviv postmark had arrived the previous day in Mr. Haniyeh's office in the Cabinet building in Ramallah, according to PA officials. Two employees in the Cabinet were overcome by a strong smell after opening the letter and were later hospitalized. They complained of headaches, breathing difficulties and weakness in the legs. In all, some 20 PA employees reported to the Ramallah hospital, some as a precaution, PA officials said. PA Deputy Health Minister Annan al-Masri said most of the patients suffered from panic, but several insisted their symptoms were real and refused to leave the hospital. (*AP*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II said that the international community was offering a "piecemeal way" to tackle the Middle East crises instead of an overall strategy. "...the core issue is the Israeli-Palestinian one, and the Israeli-Arab one, if we don't solve these problems, then for the next 10, 15, 20 years it's going to get worse and worse and worse, Israelis, Arabs, Palestinians are going to pay for it, but also the international community." (*[www.mfa.gov.jo](http://www.mfa.gov.jo)*)

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) urged Israel to release Palestinian lawmakers seized since the outbreak of fighting in the Gaza Strip in June. The IPU, which includes 146 national parliaments, issued a statement saying it was "alarmed at the arrest and detention of Mr. Abdel-Aziz Dweik, Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council." (*AP*)

The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society had begun phase II of the distribution of urgent relief supplies to thousands of Palestinian families, particularly those whose breadwinners have not received salaries during the last five months. According to Hikmat Zeid, a Palestinian Presidential Adviser, the relief items, which include food parcels, would target families of PA employees in the West Bank drawing less than US\$ 400 and who have not been paid for five months. (*Qatar News Agency*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, told a press conference in Ramallah that an agreement had been reached to reopen the Rafah Terminal on 9 August for two days from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., only from the Gaza Strip to Egypt. (*Wafa*)

9

Two Palestinians were killed and several civilians injured in an Israeli strike on a house in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. Witnesses said the Israeli air force, backed by tanks and attack helicopters, entered the camp before dawn, surrounding the house of Abu Dyab Al-Saydali. The two victims, Mohammed Ateeq, 25, and Amjad Ajami, 24, were identified as members of the Islamic Jihad. (*DPA, Ha'aretz, Wafa, Ynetnews*)

A Palestinian was killed in the northern Gaza Strip by a blast the circumstances of which remain unclear. Imad Abdullah Al-Sharata, 23, was said to have been handling an Israeli tank shell when it went off. (*AFP*)

Israel struck Lebanon's largest Palestine refugee camp, killing at least one person and wounding six others. Sources said an Israeli gunship shelled the Ein el-Hilweh camp, but Israel's military called the attack an airstrike targeting a house used by Hezbollah. The camp housed some 75,000 Palestine refugees and their descendants who had been displaced by the 1948 war. Some 350,000 Palestinians live in refugee camps in Lebanon. (*AP, Wafa*)

Rockets fired by Hezbollah struck the northern West Bank, not far from the Israeli town of Beit Shean, PA security sources said. At least five rockets ploughed into the outskirts of Palestinian villages close to the West Bank border. No injuries were reported. (*AFP*)

An Israeli air strike in Gaza City killed two Palestinians, and wounded two others. The IDF said its forces attacked a "terrorist training camp", but gave no further details. Witnesses said the strike hit a small grove of citrus trees in the Tufah area of the Gaza Strip. A spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committee, Abu Mijhad, said the two men belonged to his group. One of those killed, Ramadan Majdalawi, was its senior field commander, the group said. A five-year-old Palestinian girl who was brought to the hospital with the two men and was initially believed to have been killed in the strike died from injuries sustained during a fall from a swing. The girl suffered a fractured skull and there were no signs of

shrapnel, said Kazim Abu Libda, a doctor at the Shifa hospital. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

The IDF arrested six Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Nablus, Tulkarm and Hebron, according to Palestinian sources. In Nablus, IDF troops entered the Balata refugee camp and destroyed a building housing a mother and her four children. (WAFPA)

Four schools in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip now housed thousands of displaced Palestinians who fled their homes in the Al-Sheikh Zayed district of southern Gaza Strip after receiving telephone calls from the Israeli military saying that they would target the area in search of fighters firing Qassam rockets. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd said her staff provided food and shelter in the schools for thousands. "We are also providing counselling and are trying to help the children adapt to an environment other than their own," she said. Ms. AbuZayd said if more refugees arrived and were not returned to their homes soon, UNRWA would launch a fundraising campaign to construct homes in the relatively safer areas of the Gaza Strip.

(Aljazeera.net)

During a session of the Palestinian Legislative Council, held both in Gaza City and Ramallah by video conference, PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said attacks against his Government raised questions over the continued existence of the PA. He said, "We need to debate the future of the Palestinian Authority following the kidnapping of its second-highest ranking figure [Mr. Abdel-Aziz Dweik] and an attempt to assassinate its Prime Minister". Mr. Haniyeh urged discussion of the PA's future as demands to dissolve it had increased, according to media reports. Earlier, a PLO spokesperson also called for the dismantling of the PA owing to Israeli obstacles. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat spoke at the session, denouncing Israeli attempts to assassinate Prime Minister Haniyeh with a poisoned parcel. (AFP, Xinhua)

Israel backed down from its decision to temporarily reopen the Rafah Terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt due to security reasons, according to a spokesperson for the European Union monitoring team. "We were told [by the IDF] that a roadside bomb had been placed on the road leading to the terminal," the spokesperson said. (Xinhua)

The PLO Executive Committee condemned the abduction of PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik, calling it an aggression against the legislative authority and the Palestinian people's sovereignty. PLO Executive Committee member Muhammad Nashashebi called on Arab and European parliaments to intervene to free Mr. Dweik. He also expressed the Committee's concern over the health of Mr. Dweik. (WAFPA)

A statement issued by the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation said, "The arrest of the lawfully elected head of the Palestinian Legislative Council, just as of any other official of the Palestinian National Authority, raises quite a few questions ... with regard to the legality of Israel's arresting and trying members ... on territories that are not under Israel's jurisdiction. Such actions far from contribute to the defusing of the situation ...." (AFP, The Jerusalem Post, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru))

The following statement was issued in New York, attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

"The Secretary-General is greatly concerned that the tragic events in Lebanon and northern Israel should not distract from the urgent need to work towards a solution to the current crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. The continued killing and injuring of hundreds of civilians, including children, in Gaza, by Israeli forces is utterly unjustifiable. Further, the arbitrary arrest of many senior Palestinians – including Dr. Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the Palestinian Council – is a cause of particular concern, since it further undermines the Palestinian institutions which must be preserved if a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to be achieved.

"He also reiterates his call for a cessation of the rocket attacks from Gaza, which have indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians. He calls on the parties to resume dialogue without delay, and welcomes the continued efforts by the Government of Egypt to help bring this about.

"Above all he believes these tragic events in the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel and Lebanon, show how urgent it is that a comprehensive peace process be revived as soon as possible.

(UN News Service; UN press release SG/SM/10588-PAL/2059)

Jordan's King Abdullah II, speaking in Helsinki after meeting with Finnish President Tarja Halonen, said he was looking to work closely with the EU "to bring about a process of dialogue, negotiations between Israelis, Palestinians; Israelis and the Arabs." "Europeans play a very vital role" in helping solve the Mideast conflict," the King said, adding "It is vital for us in the region, if we are going to have future coexistence for the Israelis and Palestinians at the earliest opportunity, to reactivate the peace process. If we do not, the future will look very dark indeed." (AFP, AP)

## 10

Israeli troops surrounded a five-story building in Ramallah before dawn, exchanging fire with Palestinian gunmen inside, Palestinian security officials said. After a stand-off of several hours, six men inside surrendered to the troops. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The IDF had no comment on the raid. (AP)

Israeli warplanes destroyed two Palestinian houses in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip after residents said they had received telephone calls from the military warning them to evacuate. One house belonged to a member of the Islamic Jihad and the other to a member of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Neither man nor their relatives were hurt in the air strikes. An IDF spokesman confirmed that the houses were targeted, saying they contained weapons caches. One of the destroyed buildings was three storeys high, and residents reported blast damage to neighbouring houses.

(Reuters)

The Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip was briefly reopened, with a spokeswoman for the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) saying initially that the crossing would be opened one-way for 12 hours to allow Palestinians to depart from the Gaza Strip. Chief of Palestinian crossings security Salim Abu Safia told reporters that 500 travellers were able to pass through the crossing in the first two hours. At 1.00 p.m. (1000 GMT), the crossing was closed, with Maria Telleria, the spokeswoman for the EUBAM, saying: "We received a warning from the IDF that for security reasons the terminal will be closed. They were saying there were suicide bombers or something like that." Military officials said Israel decided to close the border crossing due to specific threats. The crossing had been opened to allow students, business people and some people requiring medical treatment to travel to Egypt, Ms. Telleria said. About 500 sick people, many of them cancer patients, were given permission to cross the border for treatment, said Dr. Omar Shehada, a PA official responsible for overseas medical treatment. People would not be allowed to cross from Egypt into the Gaza Strip. (AFP, AP, DPA)

July 2006 was the deadliest month in the Gaza Strip for nearly two years, the Palestinian Monitoring Group said in a report, with 151 people killed, mainly civilians; the highest total since October 2004, when 166 people died. From the time the latest Israeli offensive began until 8 August, the Monitoring Group said at least 170 Palestinians had been killed, of whom 138 were civilians and a quarter, children. Other reports have put the death toll from the offensive at 200. (Reuters)

The PA praised UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his remarks the previous day that the war in Lebanon should not distract attention from the ongoing Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip. "We commend Mr. Annan's calls that intend to remind of the Israeli massacres in the Gaza Strip in the shadow of what is going on in Lebanon," PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told *Voice of Palestine* radio. (DPA)

Israeli planes dropped leaflets over Gaza portraying Hamas and Hezbollah leaders celebrating in front of the ruins of Gaza City and Beirut. (AP)

Malaysia called on all nations to cut diplomatic ties with Israel over its "illegal war" in Lebanon. "Definitely the view of the international community is Israel has breached international law," Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters. "If that is so, it is only proper for countries

that have got diplomatic relations to cut ties with Israel, I think, especially countries in the Middle East" he added. (*Kyodo*)  
AT&T Inc. charges for dialling the West Bank and Gaza will be designated as 'Palestinian Authority' on bills rather than appearing as calls to Israel.  
The company also is raising the rates sharply for these calls. (*AFX*)

## 11

Israeli air strikes destroyed the homes of Naim Abu al-Foul, a member of the Popular Resistance Committees, in the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, and a Palestinian from a clan with militant ties in a suburb of Gaza City, after they received telephone calls from the army telling them to get out. No one was hurt. The army said the buildings were used to manufacture and store weapons. (*Reuters, www.idf.il*)  
An Israeli military court had ordered an immediate medical exam for Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik who had complained of chest pains while in Israeli custody, his lawyer said. (*AP*)  
The Rafah Terminal was opened for three hours, and 1,200 people crossed into Egypt. Apart from this week, the crossing has been opened just once since 25 June 2006 to allow Palestinians to return to Gaza. (*BBC*)  
Resolution 1701, which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council, stressed the importance of, and the need to achieve, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all its relevant resolutions including its resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973 and 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003. (*UN News Centre*)

India's Government decided to provide the Palestine Red Crescent Society with medicine and medical supplies worth US\$2 million. (*www.palestinercs.org*)

## 12

The IDF said it found and destroyed a tunnel used for arms smuggling between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. The tunnel was more than 150 meters long and opened into a chicken coop on the Gaza side, the army said. The army said tunnels like that were the reason it had been operating in the area recently, and they expected to find more of them as operations continued. A PA security official confirmed that a tunnel linking Egypt and Gaza had been found and destroyed. (*AP*)  
Ismail Radwan, a local Hamas leader, told reporters in Gaza that Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, were heading towards a national reconciliation after the signing of the Document of National Reconciliation (Prisoners' Document) which included the formation of a coalition Government. (*Xinhua*)

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hailed Security Council resolution 1701 as a strong foundation for reaching peace, but emphasized the need to revive the stalled Middle East peace process to avoid further conflict. The resolution's approval marked an "important first step in ending this extremely dangerous crisis," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "One of the chief objectives of the international community must be concentrating on the establishment of conditions for a resumption of the peace process in this region on all tracks. One urgent task in this regard is to normalize the situation in the Palestinian Territories and resume the dialogue between the PNA and Israel.... We expect all parties to strictly abide by this U.N. Security Council decision." President Vladimir Putin told Prime Minister Olmert in a telephone conversation that the resolution "offers a chance for a political settlement which is the only reasonable alternative to the further escalation," the Kremlin press service said in a statement. (*AP, www.mid.ru*)

## 13

Members of the Islamic Jihad shot dead a 25-year-old man suspected of collaborating with Israel in front of a crowd of people in the West Bank city of Jenin, witnesses said. The victim was identified as Bassem Malah, 22, who worked in the Israeli Arab town of Umm al Fahm. Witnesses said the man had confessed to giving information on members of Islamic Jihad to the Israelis. (*AP, Reuters*)  
A Palestinian woman and her 13-year-old son were wounded when Israeli troops opened machine-gun fire on areas alongside the security fence in the central Gaza Strip refugee camp of al-Buraj, medical sources said. Israeli sources said the soldiers opened fire after they themselves were fired at by Palestinian gunmen. Meanwhile, in the northern West Bank, Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians at two checkpoints, Palestinian sources said. In Hebron, Israeli forces stormed three hospitals and conducted searches among the patients, allegedly looking for wanted Palestinians, medical sources said. (*Xinhua*)  
The IDF arrested two Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Nablus, security sources said. They said Israeli soldiers arrested Iyad Al-'Arouj 19, in Al-'Arouj village near Bethlehem, and Abdul Rahman Abu Ghalyoun 17, in the Balata Al-Balad area of Nablus. Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers completely closed the Beit Iba military checkpoint at the southern entrance of Nablus and restricted the Palestinians' movement. (*Wafa*)  
Following a meeting with PA President Abbas in Ramallah, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana said that the European Union intended to continue efforts to settle the ongoing crisis in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian areas, and was looking to launch new talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The EU would also work towards securing the release of Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit, held captive in the Gaza Strip for the past seven weeks. Mr. Solana stressed that the Palestinian issue stood at the core of the conflict in the Middle East, and that the EU would not let it be overshadowed by other unrests. In another development, Mr. Solana said that the EU had been working on finding a new mechanism to run the Rafah Terminal on the Gaza-Egypt border, and had urged Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz to "reopen the crossing and solve that problem as soon as possible." (*DPA, Wafa*)  
During a special meeting of the PLC to discuss the Agreement on Movement and Access on the operation of the Gaza Strip crossings, PLC member Mohammed Dahlan urged the PLC to modify the Agreement. He said that the Agreement did not give the right for Israel to keep its hand on the crossing. He said Israel demanded the formation of a blacklist of Palestinians who were not to be allowed to pass the crossing. But Palestinians had rejected all the Israeli demands and insisted that all Palestinians should be allowed to cross in and out of the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*)  
PA Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad criticized the Agreement on Movement and Access, signed in November 2005, on the reopening of the Rafah border crossing, as "dangerous", saying it allowed Israel to maintain its control over the crossing. Mr. Hamad said that "Israel has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip and has no more control, but the reality is that Israel continues its control in the crossing". The crossing was sealed off after Palestinian militants captured an Israeli soldier in a cross-border raid on 25 June, but was opened briefly by the Israelis during the past two days to allow Palestinians visiting the Gaza Strip to go back home. He voiced regret over "the limited Palestinian role," saying the Palestinians "can't take the decision to open or close the terminal because Israel threatens to bomb it every now and then". Meanwhile, the Hamas-led Cabinet announced the formation of a committee that would "re-examine the agreements with Israel, especially those related to the crossing point, with Rafah Terminal in particular". (*Xinhua*)  
As first payment towards a new international funding mechanism to help meet Palestinian basic needs, the United Kingdom committed £3 million (US\$ 5.5 million) towards Palestinian front-line health services for hospitals struggling to meet demand. The United Kingdom Department for International Development said the payment would help to ensure that hospitals and clinics would be able to treat the sick and those injured in the conflict by funding essential medical supplies, hospital food and specialist health services. (*Wafa*)

14

Saraya al-Quds, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad, said in a leaflet that it had launched two Grad-type rockets at the city of Ashkelon in southern Israel, adding that the rockets had directly hit its targets. The incident took place as Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh pledged a ceasefire with Israel.

Four people were treated for shock at the Barzilai Medical Center in the city. A spokesman for Islamic Jihad, Abu Ahmed, confirmed that the militant group fired rockets at the town. (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

Israel's Air Force attacked launch pads in response to the missile attack on Ashkelon, killing three Palestinians near Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF said its aircraft fired at people who came to move the rocket launcher. Palestinians, however, said that the fatalities were farmers: Othman al-Ba'a, 55; Zuheir al-Kfarna, 50; and Ahmed al-Kfarna, 17, who were reportedly working near the Agricultural High School in Beit Hanoun. (*Ha'aretz*)

Palestinian gunmen ambushed a car carrying a Fox News crew in Gaza City and kidnapped two journalists, witnesses and Fox said. PA Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad called for their immediate release. (*AP, DPA*)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired two home-made rockets into Israel, the IDF said. There were no injuries. (*AP*)

An IDF air strike destroyed a house in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, injuring at least eight people, PA officials said. The IDF said it was an Islamic Jihad command centre. (*AP*)

Israel had released PA Labour Minister Mohammed Barghouti after detaining him for about six weeks. (*AP, Reuters*)

PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh were due to meet in the Gaza Strip to discuss developments in the region, including the proposed formation of a "National Unity Government," PA Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad said. "All factions agreed on the principle of forming a national coalition government," he said. (*DPA*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh told *Ha'aretz* he was willing to enter a complete ceasefire with Israel and that all the Palestinian militant factions had discussed several weeks ago the possibility of refraining from launching rockets at Israel. According to Mr. Haniyeh, however, Israel's military actions in the Gaza Strip had derailed his efforts at reaching a ceasefire. (*Ha'aretz*)

Salah al-Bardaweel, spokesman of Hamas PLC members, 27 of whom had been arrested by Israel, said that "speaking about forming a new Government was immoral in the shadow of the arrest of the ministers and deputies." He added that forming a new Government under this situation meant to "give permission for the occupation to keep these ministers imprisoned". (*Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas received a delegation from the World Council of Churches in Ramallah, headed by the President of the Conference of European Churches, Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont. The meeting focused on Israeli attacks on Palestinian shrines and the Israeli escalation against the Palestinian people. (*Wafa*)

PA President Abbas met the envoy of Prime Minister Blair, Lord Levy, and the British Consul General in Jerusalem, John Jenkins. The discussions included preparations for the expected visit of Mr. Blair to the Middle East. (*Wafa*)

The PA Ministry of Health said in a published report that the IDF had killed 193 Palestinians and wounded 790 others, including 83 children, since June 26. The report said that 28 Palestinians were killed with live bullets and 75 with Israeli missiles' shrapnel, and that five Palestinians died at the Rafah border crossing during the closure as a result of dire health conditions. (*Wafa*)

15

IDF troops raided the Askar refugee camp near Nablus. A Palestinian woman died of a heart attack triggered by the raids, Palestinian eyewitnesses and medics reported. Eight Palestinians were wounded. The IDF arrested 15 Palestinians in Nablus, Hebron, Qalqilya, and Bethlehem. (*Wafa, Xinhua*)

Israeli settlers, supported by IDF soldiers, razed over 100 dunums of Palestinian land in Hebron to build additional housing units. (*Wafa*)

An IDF warplane fired three missiles at a house in Beit Hanoun and completely destroyed it. No casualties were reported. (*Wafa*)

A Palestinian was killed and another detained during clashes between Israeli troops and members of the Islamic Jihad. The incident took place in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. (*AFP, Wafa*)

IDF soldiers opened fire on two men who had been spotted as they crawled towards the barrier separating Israel from the Gaza Strip, according to an army spokesperson. He confirmed that the troops had hit the men, but could not say if they had been killed. Palestinian officials said ambulances could not reach the area. (*AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz said: "I'm certain that our enemies understand they cannot defeat us. I plan to do whatever I can to restore the diplomatic support for Israel. We need to resume negotiations with the Palestinians." (*Ynetnews*)

The Realignment Committee set up by Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to evaluate the idea of a withdrawal from parts of the West Bank presented Israel's senior political officials with its report. Its main conclusion was that Israel had no security solution to the threat of rockets launched from the West Bank against Israeli population centres. (*Ha'aretz*)

Egyptian mediators had presented Hamas and other Palestinian groups with a new proposal calling for the transfer of Cpl. Gilad Shalit to Egyptian authorities in return for Israel's release of up to 600 Palestinian prisoners, including women and minors, sources close to the negotiations said. (*Reuters*)

King Abdullah II of Jordan [said](#), "The Middle East will continue to be subject to a lack of stability and security ... unless a just and comprehensive solution is found for the Palestinian cause. Regional peace and stability will only be achieved when the Palestinians restore their legitimate rights and establish their independent State". He had been holding talks with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who was on a tour of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. (*AP, www.mfa.gov.jo*)

A [press release](#) issued by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs announced that Sweden, Spain and Norway would jointly host a conference in Stockholm on 1 September 2006 on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, focusing especially on the Gaza Strip. The conference was being held in close consultation with the UN and PA President Abbas. Minister for Foreign Affairs Jan Eliasson and Minister for International Development Cooperation Carin Jämtin had invited a large number of countries and international organizations to participate in the conference. (*www.sweden.gov.se*)

UNICEF warned that thousands of Lebanese children were at risk from unexploded bombs as they returned home in the wake of the ceasefire. "Children are more vulnerable to the danger because they are attracted to things and pick them up ...," according to UNICEF's Director of Emergency Programmes Dan Toole. A similar information campaign was under way in the Gaza Strip. (*AP, www.unicef.org*)

Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese doctors, researchers and scientists, joined by delegates from Iran, gathered to discuss the AIDS problems in the Middle East. At the sixteenth International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Hebrew University Doctor Inon Schenker said, "We're building a bridge of peace, if you want.... We are not politicians but we are able to demonstrate that it is possible to sit around the same table and discuss research and a key issue like HIV/AIDS and saving lives. I think this is a very important signal." (*AFP*)

Two Palestinians were killed when an Israeli air strike blew up a house in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. The attack completely destroyed the two-storey house, killing a Palestinian militant and his father. Residents identified the dead men as a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and his father, whom they said was not a member of the group. At least 10 people were wounded, some in the house and others from neighbouring homes damaged by the explosion. (BBC, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

IDF soldiers arrested 11 Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarm and Bethlehem. In Nablus, Palestinians threw a firebomb at an Israeli bus. No casualties were reported. (Ha'aretz, Wafa)

Residents of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip said Israeli bulldozers, protected by tanks, uprooted orchards and greenery and soldiers detained six people. (Reuters)

Israeli tanks resumed artillery shelling of various areas in the northern Gaza Strip, Wafa reported. (BBC)

An Israeli aircraft fired a missile into a metal workshop in Gaza City that the army suspected of being used as a weapons storehouse. There were no injuries. (AP, Wafa)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine announced in a joint statement that they had launched two advanced home-made projectiles at the Israeli town of Nahal Oz, east of the Gaza Strip, the Bethlehem-based *Ma'an News Agency* reported. (BBC)

A 14-year-old Palestinian boy was killed during clashes between Hamas and Fatah gunmen in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Four others were injured. (AP, Reuters)

The PA made contact with all Palestinian factions to try to find and secure the release of two kidnapped foreign journalists working for Fox News. Officials said Palestinian security services were also on alert in the hunt for the two men: American reporter Steve Centanni and freelance cameraman Olaf Wiig from New Zealand. Major militant groups in the Gaza Strip have denied involvement and no public demands have been made. Meanwhile, New Zealand's ambassador to Turkey Jan Henderson arrived in Jerusalem to work with British and US diplomatic staff and Palestinian authorities to secure the release of the two men. (AFP, AP, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas reported progress in efforts to form a National Unity Government. He said, "We are on our way to reaching solutions. One of them provides for the creation of a National Unity Government based on the national accord document." Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said talks would be aimed at ending the tension between the different Palestinian factions and that he hoped they would be successful. Mr. Haniyeh also said talks would be conducted "on the basis of the Prisoners' Document with the aim of strengthening national unity, lifting the siege on our people and obtaining the release of the ministers and lawmakers" detained by Israel. The decision was made during a meeting in Ramallah between Messrs. Abbas and Haniyeh, according to PA Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad. (AFP, Ha'aretz, Wafa, Ynetnews)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said: "What happened in both the Gaza Strip and Lebanon proved that the Israeli unilateral plans and action had never led to any positive results. Gaza Strip is still under Israeli occupation, although it was evacuated last year." He added that "Palestinians would continue rejecting any future Israeli unilateral plan in Gaza or in the West Bank. Gaza and the West Bank are one geographical unified territory occupied by Israel in 1967." (Xinhua)

Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, whose country holds the European Union Presidency said, "We all know that the UN resolution [on the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah] is only a beginning. If the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is not re-launched, we will not see any lasting stability in Lebanon." Speaking to Finnish daily *Vasabladet*, he added, "The Europeans understand this. One can however ask oneself whether the United States shares this opinion. There is a tendency ... to consider the situation [in Lebanon] as another element on their war on terror ... You cannot defeat terrorism if you do not resolve the conflicts and humiliations that the people involved have suffered." (AFP)

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono reaffirmed his country's stance to protect the Lebanese and Palestinian people from Israeli attacks.

"We remain consistent in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people to realize a Palestinian State that is independent and sovereign," he said in his state of the nation address before the House of Representatives plenary session. (Xinhua)

A spokesman of Egypt's Energy Ministry, Aktham Aboul Ela, said Egypt would deliver and install electrical transformers to a power station in the Gaza Strip to replace transformers damaged by Israel during recent violence. The seven Egyptian-made electrical transformers were expected to restore 75 per cent of the power station's total electrical output, the Ministry said. (Reuters)

Japan was considering holding the first round of four-way talks among Japan, Israel, PA and Jordan in Tokyo in November 2006, according to Government sources. This followed a proposal made by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on a visit to the Middle East in July. A Foreign Ministry official would travel to Israel and other countries concerned later this month to set up the talks. The aim would be to utilize Japan's Official Development Assistance and to get all sides to discuss cooperation on promoting agriculture and improving infrastructure in the Jordan Valley. (Daily Yomiuri Online)

Costa Rica's President Oscar Arias announced his country's plan to move its embassy in Israel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, saying it was needed in order to bring his nation into line with international law and mend relations with Arab nations. "It's time to rectify a historical error that damages us on the international level and deprives us of any friendship with the Arab world," Mr. Arias told reporters. Hours later, the Foreign Ministry of El Salvador said in a statement that it would keep its embassy in Jerusalem. "Given the state of affairs in the Middle East, any decision on the location of the Salvadoran Embassy should seek to aid the pacification of the region and not affect the fragile and delicate equilibrium that is being established," the Ministry said. Costa Rica moved its Embassy to Jerusalem in 1982 under then-President Luis Alberto Monge, leading the nations of the Arab League to break off relations with Costa Rica. El Salvador established its embassy in Jerusalem in 1984. (AP)

## 17

IDF troops shot dead a Palestinian near the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, medical sources said. He was shot overnight near the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel and died of his wounds before medics were allowed to reach the site of the shooting, the sources added.

An IDF spokesman said troops had opened fire at a "suspicious character with a bag and wires" after he ignored warnings to back off. "Apparently he was hit," the spokesman added. (AFP)

Israeli forces stormed Qabatiya town, south of Jenin, using heavy gunfire, and wounded a 20-year-old Palestinian. (Wafa)

IDF soldiers beat up and wounded a 17-year-old Palestinian in Hebron. Also, Israeli forces arrested five Palestinians north of Hebron and three others in Tammun, north-east of Nablus. (Wafa)

The PA Ministry of Health said that 378 Palestinians, including 91 children, had been killed and 1,385, including 494 children, wounded since Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas said in a speech at a graduation ceremony for 500 new recruits to his presidential security force: "Yesterday, all factions met and agreed on calm and stopping all actions that may give others a pretext to attack us." Islamic Jihad's political leader Khader Habib said there had been a "general tendency" among most of the factions that attended the meeting with Mr. Abbas to halt rocket attacks. He said that while Islamic Jihad would not be part of any formal deal to cease firing rockets, the group would not violate any agreement reached by other factions to stop the attacks. A PA official close to the talks said factions would not necessarily announce a ceasefire deal but would likely halt their attacks if Israel did the same. (Reuters)

PA President Abbas said in a speech in Gaza City: "We are in consultation with Arab countries and friends to present a plan based on international legitimacy to the UN General Assembly in order to revive the peace process." (AFP)

Senior Hamas officials spelled out their terms for the possible formation of a National Unity Government in a meeting with PA President Abbas, the official Palestinian daily *Al-Ayam* said in a report. Hamas demanded that it keep the post of Prime Minister and that the ministerial positions be filled in proportion to the parliamentary strength of the respective factions, according to the newspaper. The PA's official diplomatic platform would be based on the Prisoners' Document. (*Ha'aretz*)

An Israeli military court remanded PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik in custody for a further five days. (AFP)

Cpl. Gilad Shalit's father said, according to *Channel Two TV*, that Israel was ready in principle to free Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the captured soldier. "But before any of that can happen, we need to have proof that Gilad is still alive," he added. Palestine's Ambassador to Russia, Baker Abdel Munem, told *ITAR-TASS* the same day that there was a possibility of "freeing Cpl. Gilad Shalit in the coming days ... in exchange for 600 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails". "The events of the last two months have shown that military force cannot solve problems," he added. (AFP)

The "Yesha Council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria" said the number of Israelis living in the West Bank had increased by three per cent in the first six months of the year, from 253,748 to 260,932. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

UK Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott strongly denied claims that he had used strong language criticizing the US over the Road Map in a private meeting with a group of lawmakers. "He said he only backed the Iraq war for the Road Map ... and he was really lamenting the lack of progress on the Road Map," Labour MP Harry Cohen had told the *AP*. (AP)

South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said that a comprehensive solution to the crisis in the Middle East must now be sought, based on "all relevant UN resolutions", adding that the question of Palestine, which to the South African Government remained the nexus of all conflict in the Middle East and further afield, must also receive comprehensive attention. "Increasingly, many analysts are concluding that the Road Map is dead ... and therefore, now, we must move to the final stages of discussions between Israel and Palestine", Mr. Pahad also said. He ruled out a South African role in mediation in the region, saying "all South Africa can do is continue to share its experiences that there is life after a political solution".

(*BuaNews/All Africa Global Media*)

## 18

IDF soldiers killed two Palestinians, both in their twenties, after a stand-off in the village of Obeidieh, east of Bethlehem. An IDF spokeswoman said two Islamic Jihad gunmen were killed when they resisted arrest and shot at troops from within a cave where they were hiding. Palestinian medical and security sources said that an IDF drone fired a missile at the cave. (*Reuters*)

Three Hamas members were killed in a powerful explosion near the village of Deir Ghazallah, north-east of Jenin. PA security officials said it appeared one had an explosives belt strapped to his body when it accidentally went off, killing him and the other two men. (AP, DPA, *Reuters*)

An Israeli air strike destroyed a building in the Gaza Strip where the IDF said militants were making rockets, wounding at least one. (*Reuters*)

A Palestinian was killed and another wounded near the Al Muntar (Karni) crossing in the northern Gaza Strip after IDF troops opened fire across the border, medical sources said. The dead man, Mohammed Al-Nider, 19, was a member of the Islamic Jihad. An Israeli army spokesman said the two Palestinians were engaged in "suspect activity" near the border separating the Gaza Strip and Israel. (AFP)

Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert put his proposal for an Israeli pull-out from parts of the West Bank on hold for now following the war in Lebanon. *Ha'aretz* quoted Mr. Olmert as telling the Cabinet that the issue was no longer at the top of his Government's agenda. (AP, *Reuters*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, speaking at Friday prayers, set out a series of conditions for the formation of a national unity coalition: that a Hamas member head the Government, that Cabinet Ministers and PLC members from Hamas who had been arrested by Israel be released and that no official implicated in corruption take part in it. He also said no such Government could materialize before Israel lifts its "siege" of the Gaza Strip. Hamas official Osama al-Muzaini told *Reuters* that Mr. Haniyeh had handed PA President Abbas a letter outlining Hamas' vision for a unity Government. "Any Government must be headed by Hamas and the majority of seats should be for Hamas," Mr. Muzaini said. "It is reasonable given the fact that Hamas is the majority in parliament," he said, adding that they were not absolute conditions. Azzam al-Ahmed, the head of Fatah's bloc in the PLC, said there could be no talks on a unity Government until there was "a common political agenda". "Hamas is talking about annexing other groups to their Government and not about forming a unity coalition. I say in the name of Fatah that we will not accept to be an annex to the Government; we want to be partners," he said. (AFP, *Reuters*)

"The role of the EU is to launch the Madrid Conference 2. While the first took place after the Gulf war, the second must be organized after this Lebanese war," Yossi Beilin, head of Israel's opposition Meretz party and the main architect of the Oslo agreements, said in an interview with *El Pais* newspaper. "Madrid cleared the way for the Oslo agreements and the agreement with Jordan, and Madrid 2 should obtain agreements with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians," he said, adding that the role of the EU was to convince the US to call such a conference and that Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel-Angel Moratinos was best placed to begin the process because he "knows all the parties". (AFP)

Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States (LAS) asked to send a delegation to a ministerial meeting of the Security Council to initiate a new effort for the Israeli-Palestinian peace. Yahya Mahmassani, the LAS Permanent Observer at the United Nations, said "there is very strong support" for the idea of convening a Council meeting and that it would likely take place between 20 and 24 September. He said the idea would be one of the main items on the agenda of an Arab ministerial meeting on 20 August at the LAS headquarters in Cairo, with the delegation probably to be selected at the meeting. (AP)

A spokesman for the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) said that the operating company of Dublin's Luas light rail system, Veolia Transport Ireland (formerly known as Connex), had called off plans to train Israeli personnel to operate a similar system in East Jerusalem, following trade union protests inspired by the IPSC. A Veolia Transport Ireland spokeswoman confirmed there had been three visits to Dublin in the last 18 months by delegations of Israeli engineers and consultants involved in setting up the Jerusalem light rail system. She added that these contacts had been halted "for operational reasons" and not as a result of any trade union objections. (*The Irish Times*)

## 19

An IDF soldier was shot dead by a Palestinian who opened fire at the Bekaot checkpoint in the Jordan Valley, southeast of Nablus. The attacker, identified as Muhammed Bani-Ouda, 22, was killed by Israeli soldiers. (AFP, *Ha'aretz*)

IDF troops detained PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer at a home in Ramallah where he had been hiding. (BBC)

Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit condemned Israel for what he described as Israel's attempts to force its will on elected Palestinian officials. Such actions, he said, only strengthened extremism and increased tensions and hatred. A French Foreign Ministry statement said, "We reiterate our condemnation of the arrests of members of the Palestinian Authority. Only a political procedure based on dialogue will allow an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." (DPA, *Xinhua*)

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said, "... an inter-Palestinian deal could be of great importance for calming the situation, ending the Palestinian-Israeli military standoff, creating a favourable atmosphere for resuming political dialogue.... We hope that Palestinian organizations and groups will make ... necessary choice in favour of a renunciation of violence and the settlement of existing problems with Israel at



the negotiation table.” (AFP, [www.lm.mid.ru](http://www.lm.mid.ru))

20

One Palestinian was killed and three wounded after IDF troops at the Hawara checkpoint near Nablus opened fire at Palestinian cars. The army was checking the report. The men, in their twenties, had been trying to bypass the checkpoint to get to jobs in the West Bank, according to Palestinian drivers using the same route. (BBC, *Ha'aretz*, *Xinhua*)

IDF troops arrested five Palestinians, including three women, in the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jenin. (Wafa)

IDF troops detained the Secretary-General of the PLC, Mahmoud Al-Ramhi at his home in Ramallah, according to family members. (AP, DPA, *Ha'aretz*)

Hundreds of unemployed Palestinians, demonstrating in Gaza City and Jabalya, clashed with PA police. One police officer and one worker were injured in the clashes in Jabalya. In Gaza City, hundreds of workers called on the PA and the PLC to provide working opportunities for them. (*Xinhua*)

The Gulf Cooperation Council condemned the abduction of PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer, the *Saudi Press Agency* reported. (DPA, *Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas and leaders of Palestinian factions agreed to redeploy PA security services in the northern Gaza Strip to prevent militants from firing rockets into Israel. Mr. Abbas informed US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the agreement. Ms. Rice welcomed the idea, according to sources. (DPA)

The IDF lifted the military closure it had placed on the West Bank three weeks earlier. Israel would permit some 25,000 Palestinian labourers to enter Israel for work purposes. The closure in the Gaza Strip remained in place. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Rafah Terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt remained open in both directions since its reopening the day earlier, allowing a total of 2,545 Palestinians to cross it. (*Xinhua*)

Arab League Foreign Ministers convened an emergency meeting to discuss funding of the reconstruction of Lebanon and defusing Middle East tensions. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan were spearheading an Arab effort to present a plan that would revive the peace process and talks with Israel. Saudi Arabia proposed the holding of a summit in Mecca. Seventeen of the 22 Arab League members sent their Foreign Ministers to the meeting. The ministers discussed their plan to refer the Arab-Israeli conflict back to the Security Council, which they said had failed to fulfil its mandate to preserve international peace and security. Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the Palestinian delegation, referred to the idea of sending UN troops to act as a buffer between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. “These forces would stay for a year to take part at the end of this period in holding democratic general elections and the formation of a National Government. These ideas, even if we have proposed them before, need an Arab summit to study them and lay out a pan-Arab mechanism to implement them,” Mr. Kaddoumi said. (AP, *Reuters*)

In an interview published by *Bild am Sonntag*, Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier proposed a permanent peace conference in the Middle East similar to the forum [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] that defused some of the tension of the Cold War. He said diplomats sought to promote rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians “because that is the core conflict of the region.” (DPA)

In an open letter published in the Greek newspaper *To Vima*, Socialist International President and former Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou and Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre called for a dialogue with Hamas and Hezbollah as a way out of the crisis in the Middle East. The letter called for the “immediate opening of talks for the creation of a Palestinian State, and to press for immediate talks on a peace accord between Israel and Syria.” It further said, “Both the PLO and armed groups active in Israel at the time of its creation ... abandoned violence when they came into contact with the international community.” (AFP)

At a weekly cabinet meeting, Israel's Shin Bet Chief Yuval Diskin said the rise of terror in the Gaza Strip was a strategic problem, and if not dealt with properly, in three to five years, Israel would face the same reality that existed in Lebanon. He told ministers that the Salah al-Din (“Philadelphia”) corridor along the Egyptian border had been breached and weapons had been smuggled through it. (*Ha'aretz*)

21

IDF troops at the Jilo checkpoint in northern Bethlehem reportedly assaulted Iyad Sha'lan of the nearby Dheisheh refugee camp. Mr. Sha'lan suffered bruises and wounds and was taken to the Beit Jala hospital. In Nablus, troops entered the Balata refugee camp and arrested two Palestinians. (Wafa)

At least five Palestinians were wounded in a mysterious explosion in the southern Gaza Strip, security officials said. The group were in a former settlement, scavenging for scrap metal, when the explosion occurred. Officials said they were investigating whether the blast was caused by unexploded ordnance, possibly an old artillery shell. (*Ha'aretz*)

Egypt deployed riot police at the border with the Gaza Strip in Rafah, security sources told AFP. “There is increased security at the border.

About 1,200 riot police have been deployed after the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades threatened to storm it,” the source said. (AFP)

PA President Abbas planned to hold a meeting in Jordan with Fatah to discuss a National Unity Government proposal. Khader Habib, a senior Islamic Jihad member in the Gaza Strip, said the group would not join a Palestinian coalition Government. He stressed that his organization would not agree to a ceasefire with Israel until its Government halted its aggression, adding “operations by the Palestinian resistance are a natural response to the Israeli offensive.” (*Ha'aretz*, *Xinhua*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh urged Pope Benedict XVI to intervene and secure the release of all Hamas ministers and lawmakers held by Israel. “I expect more efforts from the Pope to lift the siege on the Palestinians and end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land,” Mr. Haniyeh told Archbishop Antonio Franco and his delegation which was visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Xinhua*)

South Africa condemned the arrest of PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer. South African Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Ronnie Mamoepa said such arbitrary actions could heighten emotions and lead to an escalation of violence in the occupied territories. ([www.buanews.gov.za](http://www.buanews.gov.za))

B'Tselem [reported](#) that during the period of the war in Lebanon, there was a sharp increase in the violence inflicted on West Bank Palestinians by Israeli security forces. Most violent incidents took place in or next to checkpoints, particularly in the northern West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*, *ynetnews*)

22

An IDF soldier was lightly wounded by shrapnel from an anti-tank missile fired when IDF troops, backed by helicopter gunships, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, moved into areas near the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing - the main Israel-Gaza Strip cargo crossing, conducting house-to-house searches and arrests. The IDF said soldiers surrounded a house in the Shajaiyeh suburb of Gaza City and exchanged fire with “wanted” Palestinians, including two Hamas members, who were inside. One of the Palestinians was wounded and all five were arrested, the IDF said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Three members of Islamic Jihad were killed by IDF artillery shelling from Kissufim road, north of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Shortly after the incident, IDF troops accompanied by more than 20 armoured vehicles advanced into the Khuza'a area east of Khan Yunis. (*Palestine Information Center*)

The IDF arrested eight Palestinians in Doura town, south of Hebron. In the town of Beit Ommar and Karaza village, IDF troops launched a search

campaign arresting seven Palestinians. In Bethlehem, the IDF arrested two Palestinians in the Taqou' town, southeast of the city. One Palestinian was also arrested in Nablus, and four in Deir abu Da'eef village near Jenin. (Wafa)

Hebron Governmental Hospital sources said that Fayez Abu Hussein 16, and Ali Abu Hussein 15, were injured and suffered fractures when a settler ran them over near the settlement of "Haja", south of Hebron. (Wafa)

PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik was led in shackles into an Israeli military court in the Ofer Prison Camp where he was charged with membership of an outlawed organization. It was not immediately clear how many years he could face in prison. (AP)

Azzam el-Ahmad, head of Fatah's parliamentary bloc, said that PA President Abbas would not form a new Palestinian coalition Government unless the Hamas-led Cabinet clearly accepted a political programme that recognized Israel. (Reuters)

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) said it was ready to discuss its participation in a proposed National Unity Government. "It's important that the formation of the Government be as a start to implement the articles of the Prisoners' Document, including the activation of the PLO and establishing a united resistance front," member of the DFLP Political Bureau Saleh Zidan told reporters. He added that the coalition Government would be "more capable to face the internal conditions and the continuing Israeli aggression." Commenting on suggestion that the new Government be comprised of "technocrats", Mr. Zidan said such a Government "would not be able to end the lack of security and would not be able to stay alive." (Xinhua)

The Speaker of Syria's People's Assembly, Mahmoud al-Abrash, condemned the arrest of PA officials by Israel, SANA reported. The detention was "an obvious violation of the international laws and conventions", Mr. Abrash was quoted as saying in a letter to the Palestinian people on the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian captives and detainees. (Xinhua)

"The Palestinian Government is still looking to win the immediate and unconditional release of the two [Fox News] journalists," an official statement quoted PA Prime Minister Haniyeh as telling his weekly Cabinet meeting. "I asked Interior Minister [Saeed Siyam] to act as quickly as possible in order to retrieve the two men and arrest their abductors," he added. (AFP)

Ghazi Hamad, a PA Cabinet spokesman, told reporters ahead of a Cabinet meeting that the Government would make a decision on giving aid to the unemployed workers in the near future. It is estimated that about 73,000 Palestinians have lost their jobs since the beginning of the second intifada in 2000. (Xinhua)

The Civil Servant Union of more than 165,000 Palestinian civil servants, including teachers, announced that they would launch an open-ended strike starting 2 September, the first day of the school year, a spokesman of the Union said. Government workers had not received their salaries since March. (AFP, AP)

USG for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (AP, UN News Service, UN press release SC/8813)

23

The IDF arrested 11 Palestinians in the West Bank, saying they were wanted for their involvement in attacks against Israeli targets. Two Hamas and two Fatah members were arrested in Ramallah. Four other Fatah members were arrested in Nablus. In Jenin, Israeli soldiers arrested four Palestinians, saying they were linked to the Islamic Jihad. The arrests came after Israel declared a high alert in the West Bank upon receiving reports that a bomber might attempt to enter Israel to carry out an attack. Israeli security sources reported that the bomber was believed to be coming from the northern West Bank. According to eyewitnesses, the IDF imposed a curfew on West Bank areas and set up roadblocks around Ramallah, causing traffic jams. (Xinhua)

Husam Jaradat, 43, chief of the Saraya al-Quds (the Islamic Jihad's armed wing) in Jenin, was shot in the head and seriously wounded. Israeli commandos, disguised as Palestinians, reportedly shot him in the Jenin refugee camp. Mr. Jaradat, who had survived several Israeli assassination attempts in the past, was rushed to a hospital where he underwent surgery in an attempt to save his life. Islamic Jihad sources quoted by the AP said they were not sure Israel was behind the shooting, while the IDF said it had no information on the report. (AFP, AP, DPA)

An Israeli tank fired a shell at two men who had approached the Gaza Strip's border fence with Israel near Abasan, east of Khan Yunis. An Islamic Jihad member's body and a wounded group member were found near the area, Islamic Jihad and ambulance crews said. (AP)

PA President Abbas opened a three-day meeting of the Fatah Central Committee (FCC) in Amman to discuss the possibility of forming a unity Government with Hamas. Khaled Mismar, member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, told Wafa that 16 FCC members attended the meeting, including its Secretary-General, Head of the PLO Political Department, Farouk Kaddoumi. FCC member Salim Zaanoun told reporters before the meeting that it would also discuss the 25 June capture of an Israeli soldier. Another FCC member, Abbas Zaki, said, "We are not asking Hamas to recognize Israel but we are calling on Hamas to emulate the victorious Hezbollah, which placed its victories at the service of united Lebanese interests". (AFP, AP, Wafa)

In his remarks before the Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Club, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said that the inability to resolve the Palestinian issue and Israel's recent military operation in Lebanon had further radicalized Muslims around the world and increased the threat of global terrorism. "Once the problem of Palestine is solved, much of the wind in the sails of terrorism will come down," Mr. Wirajuda also said. (DPA)

The Holy Jihad Brigades, a previously unknown Palestinian group, released a video of two kidnapped Fox News journalists, broadcast on Aljazeera. A statement from the group, carried by the Ramattan news agency, demanded that Muslim prisoners in US jails be released within 72 hours in exchange for the men. (AP)

24

An IDF helicopter launched a rocket at a house in the Abasan village, east of Khan Yunis, belonging to Yunis Abu Daqa (Abu Dagga, according to some sources), a senior Hamas leader and a teacher at Gaza's Islamic University. The missile killed his brother, Yousef, 47, and the IDF troops that arrived shortly afterwards arrested Yunis himself. Palestinian security officials said the Israeli force then left the area. (AP, DPA, Reuters, Wafa)

The Islamic Jihad's armed wing, the Saraya al-Quds, claimed responsibility for launching a homemade rocket at Ashkelon in revenge for the death of its member in the southern Gaza Strip. The rocket caused no injuries or damage. (DPA)

Palestinians blew a three-metre hole in the Gaza-Egypt border wall at the Salahaddin gate, in a bid to allow a crowd of about 5,000 Palestinians to enter Egypt. Among them were dozens of Palestinians, who came from several Arab countries and had been unable to leave. Earlier in the week, the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) threatened to open the borders with their "private means" if the Rafah terminal remained closed, but then called off its decision saying that the previous day, they had received an indication from Egypt that the crossing would be reopened the following day. However, the crossing was not opened, and a EUBAM spokeswoman said the crossing would stay closed because of the deterioration in the security situation in the Gaza Strip. (DPA, Reuters, Xinhua)

An Israeli military court remanded PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer in custody for a further eight days following his arrest earlier this month. Mr. Al-Shaer did not appear before the military court in Ofer, near Ramallah. One of his lawyers, Osama al-Saadi, said that his client had refused to attend the hearing because he considered the court illegal. In Jerusalem, a court also extended the remand of Jerusalem Affairs Minister Khaled Abu Arafah by another eight days. (AFP, Xinhua)

The IDF detained Farhan Alqam (Mussa Alqam, according to AFP), 42, a member of Hamas and the chair of the municipal council in the village of Beit Ummar, north of Hebron. Four other villagers were also detained. According to Wafa, 16 Palestinians were arrested in the West Bank

during the day. (AFP, WAFa)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told the *Voice of Palestine* radio that the visit by UN Secretary-General Annan to the region was “important and timely especially as the region stands on a crossroad”, adding, “The region would go to peace and stabilization or go to deterioration and collapse, there is no third road”. Mr. Erakat voiced hope that the visit would help “solve the Middle East problem totally” by forcing Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders, establishing “an independent Palestinian statehood, with Jerusalem as a capital, and settling the issue of Palestinian refugees according to the UN resolution 194.” Mr. Erakat also said that the Palestinians did not want “modifications” of the Road Map. (Xinhua)

“The next Government must be a Government of national unity in which all factions participate... and not a cabinet of technocrats,” the Secretary-General of the Fatah Central Committee (FCC), Farouk Kaddoumi, said on the second day of the FCC meeting in Amman. (AFP)

UNRWA [warned](#) that the Agency’s Gaza operation was grinding to a halt because of the lack of access in and out of Gaza. UNRWA’s Director of Operations in Gaza John Ging said, “The food distribution to 830,000 people will not commence as planned next week, unless Karni [crossing] opens and a solution is found to get the containers quickly through the port of Ashdod, where there are also massive delays because of the fallout from the conflict in Lebanon.” The Karni crossing, the principal terminal for goods, remained closed for the seventh consecutive day, UNRWA said. ([www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org))

At its extraordinary meeting, the Bureau of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) adopted a declaration, thereby deciding to send an EMPA delegation to Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territory. ([www.europal.europa.eu](http://www.europal.europa.eu))

25

Israeli aircraft attacked two buildings in the Gaza Strip, wounding at least nine people, Palestinian officials said. The first strike targeted the home of Salim Thabet, an activist of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, in the northern town of Jabalya. Hospital officials said the five people in a nearby house had been moderately wounded. The second strike hit a two-storey home in Gaza City, setting it on fire and causing heavy damage. Several nearby homes were damaged, and four people were moderately wounded, officials said. The IDF said both air strikes had targeted weapons-storage facilities, and that it had warned occupants to leave the areas before the attacks. (AP)

Israeli forces arrested overnight six “wanted” Palestinians in the West Bank. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

An Israeli air strike destroyed the house of Hamas member Zyad Tambura in the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, wounding him and at least one of his neighbours. (AFP)

A Qassam rocket hit an open area in the western Negev in Israel, causing no casualties, *Israel Radio* reported. (*Ha’aretz*)

The Rafah Terminal was opened for a day, after weeks of closure following the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier. Maria Telleria, a spokeswoman for the EU observers, said some 1,400 passengers had crossed by midday. Ms. Telleria said around 15,000 people were waiting in Gaza to cross to Egypt, among them students, business people and those seeking medical treatment in Cairo, and several hundred people were waiting to enter the Gaza Strip. She also said the Palestinians had requested the border remain open three days in a row but no final decision had been made. (AP)

Fatah member Hani al-Hassan said that the Fatah Central Committee had given PA President Abbas “all the powers to begin consultations with all the national factions in order to form a national unity government... It was decided that Abbas ... should present a political initiative to the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly ... based on the resolutions of the Arab summit in Beirut.” (AFP, AP)

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions said 47 structures belonging to Palestinians had been demolished in East Jerusalem by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem during the first half of the year. (WAFa)

Italy’s Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema said in an [interview](#) with *Ha’aretz* that if the planned multinational force in Lebanon succeeded, it might be possible to create a similar force in the Gaza Strip. “The idea of sending UN troops to the Gaza Strip is currently being aired. But I think that if things go well in Lebanon, a similar positive process could also begin in the Gaza Strip: the release of [captured soldier Gilad] Shalit, a Palestinian Unity Government that meets the criteria set by the international community, and the presence of a UN force to bolster the Palestinian Government,” Mr. D’Alema said. (*Ha’aretz*)

El Salvador announced that it would move its Embassy in Israel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the decision had been made after analyzing with Israel “the current situation in the Middle East” and after Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), “whose mandate is to seek the promotion of security and greater stability, generating a new stage of favourable expectations for the Middle East.” It also said, “[El Salvador] recognizes and guarantees the right of the State of Israel to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. ... Equally, the Government of El Salvador repeats its recognition of the right of a Palestinian State to exist.” (AP)

26

A 16-year-old Palestinian, Muntasseir Suleiman Okkeh, was killed by Israeli fire after troops mounted an incursion into Nablus, security and medical sources said. At least 12 more Palestinians were reported wounded in the incident, which occurred when troops opened fire on a group of people throwing stones. An IDF spokesperson said, “Our forces arrived in Nablus Saturday morning to carry out arrests, and there were exchanges of gunfire with Palestinian activists... Molotov cocktails were thrown at the soldiers, and they fired warning rounds before targeting their attackers.”

In the incursion, troops surrounded a four-storey building and called on two activists of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades to surrender and for other residents to leave the building. After the two refused to give themselves up, the troops started using two bulldozers to demolish the building. The forces left the city later in the day without arresting anyone. Also, guards at the nearby Israeli settlement of “Itamar” shot and seriously wounded a Palestinian youth near the settlement’s fence, a medical source said. (AFP, AP)

A fisherman was seriously wounded off the Gaza Strip by fire from an Israeli gunboat, a security source said. An Israeli military spokesperson said warning shots had been fired as the boats were too far from the shore. (AFP)

An Israeli air strike hit a *Reuters* vehicle in Gaza City, wounding two journalists as they covered a military incursion, doctors and residents said. One of the Palestinian journalists, who worked for a local media organization, was wounded in the legs. A cameraman working for *Reuters* was knocked unconscious in the air strike, but he later regained consciousness in hospital. The IDF said the vehicle had been hit because it was acting suspiciously in an area of combat and had not been identified as belonging to the media. Hospital officials said a woman and a child were also wounded in the attack, according to AFP. (AFP, *Reuters*)

In the southern Gaza Strip, IDF troops arrested four Palestinians believed to be members of Hamas. Residents of Rafah’s Shoka neighbourhood in the southern Gaza Strip reported that the Israeli army had arrested four members of one family. (DPA, WAFa)

Fatah leader Nabil Sha’ath told reporters at the end of three days of talks in Amman: “Palestinian blood is sacred and we will not allow any infighting and have agreed to work towards a National Unity Government... A National Unity Government will strengthen our hands to face the Israeli occupation.” Fatah leaders said they did not intend to set any conditions for joining a coalition Government with Hamas but insisted there had to be a pragmatic approach towards resuming peace talks with Israel. (*Reuters*)

Israeli forces killed four Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including two Hamas militants. A 25-year-old Hamas member, Waleed Al-Harazin, was killed by an Israeli missile during a helicopter raid on eastern Gaza City. Later, a 21-year-old Hamas member, Taruq Halas, was killed by an Israeli tank shell during an operation near the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, east of Gaza City, in which six others were wounded. Another Palestinian was killed in an air strike aimed at militants carrying a missile near the border with Israel. The man was standing near his home, and it was not known whether he was a militant. The IDF confirmed the air strike. A 50-year-old Palestinian, Fathi Abu al-Qumbarz, was killed by automatic gunfire during Israeli operations in the Shajaiyeh neighbourhood of Gaza City, hospital officials said. Also, a 20-year-old Palestinian man was shot in the head by a sniper in Shajaiyeh, hospital officials said. The IDF said the man had approached troops while carrying an anti-tank missile. A six-year-old boy was shot in the chest and critically wounded later in the same area outside his home, Palestinian medical officials said. The IDF was investigating the report. (AFP, AP, Wafa)

Two Fox News journalists, who had been kidnapped by Palestinian gunmen on 14 August, were freed in good health. They said they had been blindfolded, tied in painful positions and forced to convert to Islam at gunpoint in captivity. (AP)

IDF troops on patrol in Jenin shot and killed an apparently unarmed Palestinian civilian, Sabri Halil, 64. According to witnesses, he was a local guard at a school and was shot in the heart after he aimed his flashlight at a passing car. He died on the spot. The army said its forces had noticed a man on a rooftop holding what looked like a weapon when they opened fire at him, adding that it had launched an investigation into the incident. (AP)

Israeli forces overnight observed two Palestinians planting an explosive device on a road used by Israeli vehicles near the "Elon Moreh" settlement, east of Nablus. A force that responded recovered a 15-kg explosive device, which was detonated in a controlled manner. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

An Israeli military tribunal ordered the detained PLC Secretary-General Mahmoud al-Ramhi, to be held for a further two weeks, his lawyers said. Mr. Ramhi, the fourth-ranking official in the Council, had been arrested on 20 August. Later, Israeli troops raided Ramallah and arrested Hamas lawmaker Mahmoud Musleh at his home. His capture put almost all of Hamas' West Bank leadership in Israeli custody, while much of the rest of the Hamas leadership is in the Gaza Strip. (AFP, AP)

Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign said that Israel had intensified the destruction of agricultural land in Walaja village, north-west of Bethlehem, for the construction of the separation wall. (Wafa)

## 28

Four Palestinians, including two Hamas members and two members of the PA presidential guard, were killed in Gaza City's eastern Shejaya neighbourhood. PA security officials said the four had been killed by an Israeli drone. The IDF said two had been killed in an exchange of fire with troops and two in an air strike. Later, Sabet Edwan, 22, was killed by Israeli tank fire near Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, hospital officials said, identifying him as a civilian. (AFP, Reuters)

A 15-year-old Palestinian youth was killed and his 13-year-old brother seriously injured when what was apparent an unexploded Israeli projectile detonated in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, hospital officials and witnesses said. (DPA)

Israeli soldiers detained the local head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Burhan Mohammed Qad, 30, in the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp in Jericho, a local security source said. (AFP)

Israeli forces arrested eight Palestinians in the West Bank: one in Dura, south-west of Hebron; three in Khader, south of Bethlehem; three in Azzun, east of Qalqilya; and another in Zabadba, south-east of Jenin. (Wafa)

More than 150 workers at two hospitals in Nablus went on strike to demand that the PA pay their overdue salaries. (AP)

French President Jacques Chirac told a gathering of French ambassadors in Paris that the war in Lebanon had flared partly because of deadlock in the Middle East peace process, urging world powers to revive talks between Israel and the Palestinians. "This unprecedented crisis is the product of other impasses," Mr. Chirac said, referring to the "interminable" Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Given the situation, we need an immediate revival of the diplomatic process," he added, calling for a "rapid meeting" of the Quartet. "To resign oneself to the status quo is to risk being trapped in a cycle of violence which will get out of control. Israel legitimately aspires for security, but security does not go without justice," he said. (Reuters)

Israel and the Palestinian Authority had agreed in principle to station international observers at the Al-Muntar (Karni) border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, *Ha'aretz* reported. The idea was proposed by the United States security coordinator General Keith Dayton. According to the proposal, some 90 international observers, backed by 30 assistants, would be stationed on the Palestinian side of the terminal, whose task would be to ensure that the PA security personnel stationed there do what is necessary to prevent terrorist attacks in the vicinity. The PA personnel would be drawn mainly from the PA presidential guard and would receive additional equipment and training. While the observers would be European, American officials would supervise them. (*Ha'aretz*)

Egypt's Minister of Electricity and Energy Hassan Younis announced that the Ministry would start linking the Gaza Strip with the Egyptian electricity network on 29 August. (Wafa)

Jordan's national electricity company and the PA signed an agreement to provide Jericho with electricity by July 2007. (AP)

The World Food Programme (WFP) [warned](http://www.wfp.org) that the situation in Lebanon must not be allowed to overshadow the rapidly deteriorating living conditions of the people in Gaza. "The economy is really reaching rock bottom. Industries which were once the backbone of Gaza's economy and food system, such as the agriculture and fishing industries, are suffocated by the current situation and risk losing all viability," said Arnold Vercken, WFP Country Director in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org))

## 29

The IDF killed three Palestinian militants and injured five other people in a missile attack east of Gaza City, PA security sources said. (DPA)

IDF troops shot and killed two local leaders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, Palestinian medics said. (AP)

A 60-year-old Palestinian woman died of wounds she had sustained in an Israeli air raid on Jabalya a month ago, medical sources reported. (Wafa)

The IDF arrested five "wanted" Palestinians in Hebron, Ramallah and Bethlehem. An IDF patrol came under fire near Qalandiya. There were no casualties or damage in the incident. (*Ha'aretz*)

An Israeli military court extended the detention of PA Finance Minister Omar Abdul Razeq and 12 PLC members to 17 September. (AFP)

Some 300 unemployed Palestinian labourers surrounded the PLC building in Gaza City demanding welfare payments and scuffling with police.

Several hundred teachers demonstrated in Ramallah demanding their salaries. (AFP, AP)

Azzam el-Ahmad, Fatah PLC faction head, told the *Voice of Palestine* radio: "We were about to implement the document of National Accordance and form a coalition, but the conditions outlined by [Prime Minister] Haniyeh blocked the efforts." (*Xinhua*)

The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank had increased by 2.7 per cent during the last six months, according to statistics published by the Interior Ministry, bringing the total to 260,042 (not including East Jerusalem). (AFP)

Italy's Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema said that following the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict "It is high time for a similar trans-Atlantic joint venture on

the Israeli-Palestinian front. The tragic situation in Gaza shows the need for such an active international engagement,” Mr. D’Alema said in comments to *The Wall Street Journal*. “ Hamas and Hezbollah are not al-Qaeda,” he said in an interview with *Corriere della Sera*. “IRA and ETA have become political movements from terror groups... We must encourage this metamorphosis in the Middle East.” (AFP, AP)

Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyanni told visiting Indian Minister for External Affairs Anand Sharma: “The time has come for vigorous diplomacy, both in terms of Lebanon as well as over the Palestinian issue.” (Xinhua)

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan travelled to Israel for the next leg of his Middle East tour. He was scheduled to meet Israel’s Defence Minister Amir Peretz and the families of abducted Israeli soldiers. He was to meet Prime Minister Olmert, PA President Abbas and other officials the following day. (AFP)

30

Eight Palestinians, including a 14-year-old boy, were killed by Israeli fire in the Gaza Strip, while the West Bank military chief of the Islamic Jihad, Hossam Jaradat, 40, died after being wounded a week earlier. According to witnesses, two Shajaiyeh residents, Rami and Yasser Al-Gharabli, 27 and 25, tried to escape their house encircled by Israeli tanks when they were hit. Two other men, Raed Isbita, 23, and Mohand Jindiya, 23, attempted to help the pair but were struck in turn. Another man, Salman Abu Qunbus, 25, was killed in a separate incident in Shajaiyeh. According to witnesses, the five men were all civilians. An army spokesman said, however, that the tanks fired after “armed men approached troops operating in Shajaiyeh.” Overnight, a 24-year-old mentally handicapped man was killed by Israeli fire in the northern Gaza Strip after he approached the border with Israel. Troops also flattened crops, destroyed greenhouses and chicken coops and uprooted dozens of trees, residents said. (AFP)

Settlers uprooted dozens of olive trees in Hebron. The farmers and the owners of the land said settlers from “Sussiya” destroyed large planted areas. (Wafa)

Secretary-General Kofi Annan held a news conference with PA President Abbas in Ramallah. He said, “It is important for me that I have been able to witness the suffering of the Palestinian people first-hand.... President Abbas and I fully agreed that an end to the occupation and the creation of the Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel, is the key to resolving the problems of this troubled region.” Mr. Annan also said, “We don’t have immediate plans for deployment of international troops to the Palestinian territories ... once the Palestinians have drawn up a programme, settled their differences and come up – and rallied around a unified position and have engaged with the Israelis ... the international community will be prepared to support you, depending on what the requirements of the agreement would be.” Mr. Abbas said, “Security and stability can be attained only by guaranteeing the return of legal rights to the Palestinian people, implementing the resolutions of international legality, establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital and resolving the issue of Palestinian refugees.” (AFP, AP, Ha’aretz, Political Transcript Wire, Ynetnews)

At least 2,000 Palestinian civil servants marched to the PA President’s headquarters in Ramallah, demanding that the Government of PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh be dismissed. “We are on the verge of collapse,” according to public employees representative Bassam Zakarneh addressing President Abbas and the crowds. “We urge you (Mr. Abbas) to use your constitutional powers to bring us out of this crisis,” he said. (DPA)

PA President Abbas criticized Palestinian militants for continuing to fire rockets at Israeli border communities. “What is happening in Gaza as a result of rockets fired in vain must stop right now because there is no national interest in this continuing,” he said. He added that dozens of Gazans have been killed and many more injured in recent months and “for what?” Mr. Abbas said, in a speech to thousands of unpaid employees demonstrating at his headquarters in Ramallah. He also said that people had the right of expression within the legal framework and the national interest. (AP, Wafa, Xinhua)

The IDF and Shin Bet recommended six days ago that Israel shut down the Rafah Terminal to pressure the Palestinians to release abducted soldier Gilad Shalit. This was reportedly said during a Defence Ministry meeting whose transcripts *Ha’aretz* had acquired. In practice Israel closed the crossing at will, on the pretext of “intelligence of an imminent attack.” This automatically prevented the European observers from reaching the crossing, which ensured that it remained closed, *Ha’aretz* reported. In the document, Shin Bet’s stance was: “We oppose the opening of the crossing, even for a few hours, so long as the matter of the abducted soldier remains unchanged. Pressure on this matter must remain in place at this stage.” (*Ha’aretz*)

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