

Division for Palestinian Rights
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine**

**Monthly media monitoring review
 May 2007**

Monthly highlights

- UN Secretary-General appoints experts to begin the work of establishing the Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ([10 May](#))
- UN Secretary-General appoints Michael C. Williams of the United Kingdom as his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. ([15 May](#))
- Hamas and Fatah members engage in heavy fighting in Gaza City. ([16, 18 May](#))
- Israel launches air strikes on Hamas targets in Gaza City. ([20 May](#))

1

Israeli forces arrested 25 Palestinians in several areas of the West Bank, Israeli media reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Palestinian farmer was wounded when Israeli soldiers opened fire at him near Hebron, according to Palestinian security sources. An IDF spokesperson said the shooting occurred after Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle, damaging it. (*AFP*)

Palestinian Authority Finance Minister Salam Fayyad told union leaders he would pay at least half salaries to Government workers, but not their full wages, because the aid embargo remained in place. Some \$55 million a month expected from Arab League members would cover about half of the monthly payroll of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Mr. Fayyad said the first partial payments would be made next week, Government employees' union leader Bassam Zakarneh said after the meeting in Ramallah. Payments would coincide with allowances paid to workers through the Temporary International Mechanism, estimated at some \$34 million a month. Union leaders had threatened a new round of work stoppages to demand full wages and back pay. (*Reuters*)

Twelve European parliamentarians from seven countries, on a six-day visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, met in the Gaza Strip with PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, who said after the meeting that there were steady and confident steps being taken towards lifting the siege. "We consider this as an opportunity for the road to peace," Member of the European Parliament Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (Cyprus) told reporters. "This financial embargo should be lifted." A European Union (EU) spokeswoman said the EU policy of boycotting Hamas remained unchanged, adding, "The Parliament is not the official representative of the European Union in matters of foreign policy." Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev called the meeting a very negative occurrence. (*Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh told a European parliamentary delegation that the Government was quietly but actively working to guarantee the freedom of abducted *BBC* reporter Alan Johnston. He said that he had personally authorized by the Government to follow up the case and that he hoped all efforts would lead to his release. He also said, "We had expressed our anger that Johnston [was] still missing." (*AP, Xinhua*)

Rashid Abu Shbak, chief of the Palestinian Security Services, said in an interview with *Al-Ayyam* that they "know the identity of the party that kidnapped journalist [Alan] Johnston, but the security situation in the Gaza Strip does not allow these services to carry out an operation to free him." Moreover, he said "the British Government has asked President Abbas not to resort to force to free him so as not to put his life in danger". (*AFP*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, speaking before the General Assembly in New York, said: "I very much hope that we shall soon see the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, accompanied by corresponding measures on the Israeli side. I also take this opportunity to plead for the immediate release of the *BBC* journalist Alan Johnston, who was abducted in Gaza." (*BBC*)

2

A Palestinian was killed in what medics said was Israeli fire in the northern Gaza Strip, but the IDF denied the incident. Messaud Rajab Sabah, 35, was collecting scrap iron with his brothers near the northern city of Beit Lahia, close to the border with Israel, when he came under fire. (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

Tens of thousands of Palestinians held a one-day strike to protest the Government's inability to pay full wages. "Today's strike is a warning. If the Government does not heed our demands, then I am afraid we are heading towards an open-ended strike," said Government workers' union chief Bassam Zakarneh. (*Reuters*)

The Popular Resistance Committees condemned the continuing land confiscation for the construction of the wall and settlements in the West Bank. The Popular Resistance Committees said the Israeli authorities confiscated 400 dunums to adjust the route of the wall in the area of Jenin. The annexed land is owned by Palestinians and was being used for agriculture. Residents of the villages of Jalboun Faqu'a, Arbona, Anin, Al-Taibeh and Rumaneh in Jenin received Israeli notification that the route of the wall would be changed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

"Anyone who thinks that they can topple the Palestinian Government without bringing about the collapse of the [Palestinian] Authority doesn't know what he is saying," PA President Mahmoud Abbas told reporters. (*Ha'aretz*)

The US administration had drawn up an eight-month timetable setting dates for when Israeli and Palestinian officials would complete steps meant to bolster prospects for peace talks. The US timeline, the first of its kind presented to both sides, included specific dates for when Washington envisaged Israel letting Palestinian bus and truck convoy travel between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Dates were also set for when PA President Abbas would step up deployment of his forces and take specific measures to begin curbing rocket attacks, which would be by the end of 2007. Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that some of the steps were difficult, but that it was the right approach. A US official said that both sides had agreed to the benchmarks and that the benchmarks gave everyone an incentive. (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would participate in a meeting expected to be held in Egypt with major powers involved in the Middle East peace process that

would also include Syria at an upcoming summit on Iraq. At this summit, a meeting was being planned between the Quartet and an Arab delegation designated to explain the Arab Peace Initiative. Expected to participate were Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria, according to a source. (AFP)

The Palestinians want to establish a new fund that would allow donor countries to send them aid while formally maintaining their boycott of the Palestinian Unity Government, a senior official said. Under the arrangement, foreign aid could be sent to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in which Hamas was not represented. The idea was proposed by PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. The Palestinian Cabinet had approved the idea, according to PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti. (AP)

PA Finance Minister Fayyad planned to meet with Arab League officials in Cairo the following week to persuade Arab States to make good on \$2 billion they had promised the Palestinians since 2002. Mr. Fayyad also said he hoped to collect an additional \$250 million pledged by Saudi Arabia last summer. (AP)

PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti told an EU delegation visiting Ramallah that the international community should decide whether they want the PA to exist or not. He urged the EU to recognize the National Unity Government, pointing out that there was no justification for the embargo to continue. He also urged the EU to exert pressure on Israel to pay the tax revenues, about \$600 million, seized by the Israeli Government, which was tantamount to blackmail, he said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The PA had known where to find kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston but avoided raiding the hideout at Britain's request, Prime Minister Haniyeh said.

Negotiators had instead persuaded the captors to reduce their demands for the release of the correspondent. (AP)

"There are negotiations mediated by Egypt between the Israeli Government and Hamas. From what I've learned recently, the [prisoners'] exchange could be concluded in two or three weeks," PA President Abbas told reporters in Ramallah after meeting with Israeli Knesset member Yossi Beilin. (AFP)

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met in Cairo on the last leg of Mr. Abe's five-nation tour of the Middle East. They were expected to reaffirm their cooperation in promoting peace in the Middle East. (AP, Kyodo)

The Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, published today by the US State Department, concluded that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained a source of terrorist motivation. (www.state.gov)

A US federal judge in Manhattan dismissed the war crimes lawsuit against Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter brought on behalf of Palestinians who had lost relatives in an IDF bombing of a Gaza City apartment building on 22 July 2002. (Ha'aretz)

The PLO Mission in Washington announced an exhibit entitled "Made in Palestine," devoted to works of Palestinian artists living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Also included were artists from Syria, Jordan and the US. The exhibit would be held at the Andres Bello Hall of the Venezuelan Embassy and would be open to the public until mid-June 2007. (Wafa)

3

The IDF withdrew from the Nur Shams refugee camp near Tulkarm after a violent incursion lasting several hours. The Israeli forces arrested 12 members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron, sources said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF announced its decision to demolish 12 houses in the Orthodox Christian quarter in Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem, to extend the separation wall, local sources said. (Wafa)

Israeli soldiers and settlers attacked a Palestinian family in the village of Beit Iksa near Jerusalem after a quarrel broke out between the family and an Israeli construction team which had removed the fence surrounding their house to extend the separation wall. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said, in an interview published in a Palestinian newspaper in Gaza, that the dissolution of the PA was one of several future scenarios that would be discussed if the international siege on the Palestinian people continued. PA President Abbas told a rally that he might resign in two months if Western sanctions were not lifted, a senior official said. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat announced that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would visit the Middle East in mid-June, and would meet PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert and resume the exploration of a political horizon. Mr. Erakat also pointed out that the PA was working with the US on determining limitations and signals, to set up a program to implement what has been already agreed between the Palestinians and the Israelis. (Ma'an News Agency)

Members of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) urged the EU to end the aid embargo on the Palestinian Government and resume direct payments. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh was invited to visit South Africa by visiting Intelligence Minister Ronald Kasrils. (AP)

"A situation in which the Israeli Government ... is under pressure, should not be allowed to lead to the abandoning of our joint efforts to strengthen the peace process," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters in Berlin. "I hope that despite the present difficulties in Israel after the submission of the [Winograd Commission] report, the efforts will continue," he said. "I especially hope the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas will continue ... and that the timetable is adhered to." (Reuters)

German Foreign Minister Steinmeier would hold informal talks with members of the Quartet and Arab foreign ministers on the sidelines of the Ministerial Conference on Iraq in Sharm-el-Sheikh, his spokesman said. He would then travel the following day to the Occupied Palestinian Territory for talks with PA President Abbas and continue on to Israel on 5 May for a meeting with Prime Minister Olmert. (AFP)

The EU and the PA Finance Minister, Salam Fayyad, had agreed to start making regular partial payments to Palestinian workers at the same time each month, European officials said. Palestinian officials said that the coordinated payments were expected to begin arriving in accounts within a few days. (Ha'aretz)

4

Israeli soldiers shot and killed three Palestinian gunmen in an exchange of fire near Jenin, the IDF said. PA security officials said that the gunmen belonged to Islamic Jihad. (AP)

Police at Brussels airport denied entry to PA Youth and Sports Minister Bassem Naim who was en route to the Netherlands to attend a conference. Dutch authorities had cancelled his visa after learning he was a Hamas member. (Reuters)

The United States had submitted a document with deadlines for easing Palestinian movement and improving Israeli security, including removing Israeli roadblocks in the West Bank and halting Palestinian rocket fire, Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said. The deadlines were not binding. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was expected to return to the region to discuss the deadlines with both sides, but Mr. Erakat said that no date had been set. He added that the Palestinians welcomed the document and would study it carefully. "I believe that this is the right approach. ... This is transferring words to deeds," he said. An official in the office of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said some of the ideas contained in the document were already at various stages of implementation, citing relaxed restrictions at the "Karni" cargo crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. "There are a few [ideas] Israel will not be able to address at present because of security concerns," the official added, without elaborating. (AP, Ha'aretz)

German Foreign Minister Steinmeier invited foreign ministers from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria, as well as Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa to join a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on 14 May. He extended the invitation during the ministerial conference on Iraq, according to a source with the German delegation. European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who also took part in the meeting, said Arab foreign ministers had echoed the importance of seizing the moment, describing the Arab Peace Initiative as extremely important. "They say this moment is so important now, we should not waste any time and that is why I hope they will manage to create some momentum." (AFP)

An official Jordanian delegation met with Israeli Welfare Minister Isaac Herzog to discuss efforts to revive the Middle East peace process. An Israeli official said that the head of the delegation, former Prime Minister Abdel Salam al-Majali, had arrived in Israel for talks on finding ways to push forward the peace process and increase Jordan's role in it. "Majali called on Israel to take brave steps and move towards a diplomatic process with Mahmoud Abbas, which would lead to a two-State solution," the official added. (AFP)

5

IDF soldiers shot dead a Palestinian in the northern Gaza Strip and another was wounded by Israeli gunfire in Beit Hanoun. Israeli special units randomly opened fire towards Palestinian farmers along the border with the Gaza Strip and wounded a number of them. (Wafa)

Israeli forces stormed Bethlehem, besieged a house and arrested three Palestinian brothers. Israeli forces also arrested a Palestinian from Jenin. (Wafa)

IDF troops arrested three Palestinians north of Tulkarm. (Ma'an News Agency)

Islamic Jihad members fired three rockets at the southern Israeli town of Sderot, damaging a house but causing no injuries, to avenge the killing of three members of the group by Israeli troops the day before. (AP)

PA Foreign Minister Ziyad Abu Amr and Finance Minister Salam Fayyad urged visiting German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to work towards ending

the boycott of the PA. "We asked His Excellency to exert his utmost efforts, as the German Foreign Minister and President of the EU, to end the siege on the Palestinian people," Mr. Abu Anr said at a joint news conference with Mr. Steinmeier. Mr. Steinmeier later met with PA President Abbas. (AP)
The Independent reported that Britain's Ambassador to Israel Tom Phillips had raised serious concerns with Prime Minister Olmert's office over proposals to demolish an empty hotel in East Jerusalem and build apartments for 122 Israeli settler families in its place, some 50 metres from Britain's Consulate-General. (*The Independent*)

6

A Palestinian was killed and six others were wounded when gunmen opened fire at a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Rafah. Gunmen from a religious extremist group opened fire and threw grenades as students, parents and teachers were leaving a party, they said. The dead man was identified as Suleiman al-Shaar, a bodyguard of Majid Abu Shamallah, a Fatah PLC member. Three of the alleged gunmen were detained by PA security forces. (AFP)

Israeli forces arrested a member of the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, after they had shot him in the leg during an incursion into the Jenin refugee camp. Israeli forces also arrested three Palestinians in Bethlehem and four others in other parts of the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces swept into Jenin and randomly opened fire towards houses, moderately wounding five Palestinians. (Wafa)

Israeli soldiers severely beat a 19-year-old Palestinian from a village near Hebron after they had stopped his car. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli suffered moderate wounds when a Qassam rocket struck the southern Israeli town of Sderot. It was the fifth rocket fired on southern Israel from the Gaza Strip during the day, an IDF spokesman said. The military wing of Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. (AFP)

An Israeli armed guard was seriously injured when gunmen opened fire at a truck near Ramallah. (AFP)

PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad said he had made partial payments to PA workers for the first time. Together with the money received by workers from the Temporary International Mechanism, the payments totalled about half of normal wages. "Until the financial horizon becomes clear, we're going to pay around half salaries to everyone. We started today," Mr. Fayyad said. The union that represents Government workers dismissed the partial payments as insufficient and threatened to call an open-ended strike to demand full salaries and back pay. (Reuters)

Two Israeli human rights groups, B'Tselem and HaMoked - The Center for the Defence of the Individual, said in a joint report that Israel's Shin Bet security service had tortured Palestinian prisoners during interrogations in defiance of a 1999 court ruling outlawing such practices. Interrogators beat suspects, shackled them in painful, contorted positions and deprived them of sleep for long periods, according to the report, entitled "Absolutely forbidden." (AP, www.btselem.org)
Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit was quoted by MENA news agency as saying that Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni would visit Cairo on 10 May for talks on the Arab peace plan. The talks would also be attended by Jordan's Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah al-Khatib, the report said. (AFP)

7

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians in Ramallah and Bethlehem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A 16-year-old Palestinian girl was injured when she was shot in the back inside her house when Israeli soldiers opened fire at a group of stone throwers in Hebron. (Wafa)

A rocket fired by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip struck near a nursery school in Sderot but caused no injuries. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. (AFP)

An Israeli aircraft attacked a car carrying an Islamic Jihad rocket-firing squad in the Gaza Strip, wounding one militant, the group said. An IDF spokesman said the air strike had targeted a vehicle carrying weapons. (Reuters)

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said in a statement released after his meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "Prime Minister Olmert made it clear that he views as positive the developments in the Arab world, led by the moderate Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, and noted their willingness to bring about a peace agreement that includes recognition of the State of Israel. The Prime Minister emphasized the central role of Saudi Arabia, which has great influence on the Palestinians and on moderate Arab States. He reiterated that Israel's unambiguous position is non-acceptance of the right of return as expressed in the Arab initiative." (www.pmo.gov.il)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier had invited his Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni to discuss the Middle East peace process and Israel's reaction to the Arab peace plan at an upcoming meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, he told reporters after meeting with Ms. Livni. PA Foreign Minister Ziyad Abu Anr was also scheduled to address the meeting. (AP)

The following statements were issued by the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General is deeply disturbed over yesterday's violent incident outside a United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) school in the Gaza Strip, in which one person was killed and eight injured, including two UNRWA schoolchildren. This is the latest of a series of intra-Palestinian clashes that have claimed innocent and unarmed victims. He calls on the Palestinian National Unity Government to exercise its responsibility to ensure law and order, including the protection of humanitarian organizations such as UNRWA that deliver vital services to the people of Gaza.

The Secretary-General also calls on the Palestinian Authority to take all actions needed to halt immediately the firing of rockets against Israeli population centres, which by definition target civilians.

(UN press release SG/SM/10979)

As Alvaro de Soto concludes his service to the United Nations today after 25 years of dedicated work for the Organization, the Secretary-General wishes to express his profound gratitude for Mr. de Soto's outstanding service. During a distinguished career both at United Nations Headquarters and in the field, the diplomatic talents of Under-Secretary-General Alvaro de Soto were in high demand around the world, from El Salvador to Myanmar, Cyprus to Western Sahara and most recently in the search for peace in the Middle East. Of particular note was the decisive mark that Mr. de Soto made in the Central American peace process. The agreements he helped to broker in El Salvador not only brought a better future to the people of that country, but also became a model for United Nations peacemaking efforts elsewhere. Mr. de Soto's contributions to the development of United Nations practices in conflict mediation and resolution will be a lasting part of his legacy to the United Nations. The Secretary-General joins United Nations staff in wishing him the very best in his future endeavours.

(UN press release SG/SM/10978)

A meeting between Hamas and Fatah delegations was held in Gaza City. PA President Abbas, Prime Minister Haniyeh, and other officials attended, including members of the political partnership committee established after the Mecca Accords. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

8

The IDF arrested 28 Palestinians in the West Bank, including 15 Hamas members in Tulkarm, *Israel Radio* reported. Other detainees, arrested in Ramallah and Hebron, were Islamic Jihad activists, said the report. (*Xinhua*)

The Islamic Jihad's military wing announced it had fired a Qassam rocket at Sderot in southern Israel. "The shelling was to respond to the Israeli crimes against our Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank," it said in a statement. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli Government officials said they were surprised at US Secretary of State Rice's decision to postpone a scheduled visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah in mid-May, calling it unprecedented, *Israel Radio* reported. US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack had said in that context that the political situation in Israel had become a bit more complex in the near term. The decision "should in no way denote any lessening of our focus on the issue and our determination to help the two parties move the process forward," Mr. McCormack added. "Surely, the Secretary will be out there in the not-too-distant future." (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA), www.state.gov)

Richard Makepeace, Britain's Consul-General in Jerusalem, met with PA Prime Minister Haniyeh to discuss the fate of a British journalist kidnapped by Palestinian militants. A senior British diplomat, who declined to be identified, said that the meeting did not signify a break in Britain's boycott of Hamas. (AP)

Prime Minister Olmert would shortly meet PA President Abbas, his spokeswoman Miri Eisin said. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said: "In principle we are not against any meeting. We haven't agreed on a date." He also denied Israeli media reports that Israeli and Palestinian leaders had been holding secret talks. (AP)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told reporters that the PA was ready to deploy forces along the Gaza Strip's borders with Israel to prevent rocket attacks, but he demanded that Israel abide by the ceasefire first. (AP, Xinhua)

The IDF had prepared a contingency plan to counter rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and thwart Palestinian efforts to consolidate military power there, military officials said. The plan envisaged creating a buffer zone on the Palestinian side of the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel, an escalation of military action following the firing of Qassam rockets, the renewal of aerial assassinations, improved technology for detecting and destroying underground tunnels and reinforced intelligence capabilities. (AP, Ha'aretz)

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said IDF soldier Gilad Shalit would most likely not be released during Prime Minister Olmert's term in Government. (Ha'aretz)

Ehud Netzer, professor of archaeology at Hebrew University, told a news conference that the tomb of King Herod had been discovered in the West Bank, south of Bethlehem. Shaul Goldstein, an official with the "Gush Etzion" settlement block near the site, said the find constituted new proof of a connection between Gush Etzion and the Jewish people and Jerusalem and called on the Israeli Government to name it a national and religious site. PA Tourism Minister Kholood Deibes, who oversees archaeological sites, told AFP that a team of Palestinian archaeologists was due to inspect the site and that the ministry would not comment until after receiving their report. (AFP)

The latest Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics report stated that, according to International Labour Organization standards, the percentage of jobless persons who were seeking work decreased from 22.0 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2006 to 21.6 per cent in the first quarter of 2007, compared with 10.0 per cent in the third quarter of 2000 (before the beginning of Al-Aqsa Intifada). The results showed that the unemployment rate in the West Bank had increased from 16.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2006 to 17.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2007, while it had noticeably decreased in the Gaza Strip from 34.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2006 to 30.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2007; despite that fact, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip had still been high. (Wafa)

South Africa's Minister for Intelligence Services Ronald Kasrils, who had invited PA Prime Minister Haniyeh to visit the country, said: "Those who myopically object to such invitations merely show that they have learned nothing from South Africa's transition ... Such logic as they espouse would not have allowed P.W. Botha to have met with imprisoned Mandela nor his release by F.W. De Klerk as partner in negotiations". (Reuters)

9

Israeli forces entered parts of the northern Gaza Strip as Palestinian militant groups warned that Israel would lose if it launched a ground offensive. Witnesses said that the troops, backed by tanks and helicopters, had moved some 500 meters into the Gaza Strip near Beit Lahia. In another incident, IDF soldiers positioned outside the fence in the eastern Gaza Strip shot and wounded an elderly Palestinian in the legs. (Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, Wafa, Xinhua)

Israeli forces arrested three Hamas members near Ramallah and three Palestinians east of Jerusalem, according to Israeli radio. Three Palestinian youths were also arrested in Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

Some 3,000 Palestinian police had begun deploying in Gaza City, under the first phase of a security plan approved by the Cabinet, a Palestinian official said. Set to last 100 days, it would cover traffic and crime fighting, officials said, adding that the overall goal would be to put an end to the chaos and violent infighting that had plagued the Gaza Strip. PA President Abbas had ordered implementation of the plan after a series of meetings with Prime Minister Haniyeh. (AP)

The World Bank issued a [report](#) calling on Israel to ease its extensive restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank in order to fuel an economic revival. The report stated that the restrictions often went beyond Israel's legitimate security needs and were used to protect settlement activity. The report also stated that the controls had carved up the West Bank into three segments and 10 enclaves and restricted Palestinian access to some 50 per cent of its area. The Palestinian economy could not recover as long as large areas remained inaccessible and freedom of movement remained the exception rather than the rule. David Craig, the World Bank Director for the West Bank and Gaza, said: "The system has created such a high level of uncertainty and inefficiency that the normal conduct of business in the West Bank has become exceedingly difficult and investment has been stymied... Restoring sustainable Palestinian economic growth is dependent on its dismantling". (AP, The Guardian, Ha'aretz, Ynetnews, Wafa, www.worldbank.org)

PA Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad, following his meeting with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, in Cairo, warned of the financial crisis that threatened the PA and could precipitate the downfall of the National Unity Government. He told journalists that the aim of his visit was to accelerate the transfer of sums promised during the Riyadh summit and previous Arab summits. He said: "There are no minimum funds [available] to enable the [Palestinian] Authority to fulfil its obligations to its people ... Our inability to function will have disastrous repercussions. Without a solution to this problem, we will not be able to act in a way that allows the Government to continue". (Wafa)

The Army of Islam, in an audio recording delivered to journalists in Gaza City, claimed responsibility for the abduction of British journalist Alan Johnston on 12 March. In London, the BBC said it was studying the contents of the tape. In the recording, the group demanded that the British Government "release our prisoners and particularly Sheikh Abu Qatada in exchange for Mr. Johnston." The recording was accompanied by photographs showing Mr. Johnston's press card.

However, it did not include any evidence that Mr. Johnston was still alive. Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha said: "We reject these methods used by certain Muslim believers, because they harm Islam. The affair of Alan Johnston is immoral and we call on his holders to release him". (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Fatah spokesman in the Gaza Strip, Abdul Hakim Awad, said that Fatah and Hamas representatives would meet in Cairo by the end of next week in order to discuss how to activate the PLO in accordance with the Mecca Agreement. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, was opened in Pretoria by Essop Pahad, Minister in the Office of the President of South Africa. In the opening session, statements were also delivered by Tuliameni Kalomoh, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Paul Badji, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations and Chairman of the Committee; and Samih Al-Abed, PA Minister of Public Works and the representative of Palestine to the Meeting. The opening session was followed by a panel on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. (UN News Centre, UN press releases [GA/PAL/1048](#), [1049](#), [1050](#))

Addressing the PLC, Italy's Parliament Speaker Fausto Bertinotti urged Palestinian lawmakers to recognize Israel and accept negotiations as the only means to establish their own State. Mr. Bertinotti, the first Western guest to address the Council elected in 2006, also urged a resumption of foreign aid. "If the National Unity Government is not allowed to work and start governing, all that we can expect is collapse," he said. (AP)

10

A pregnant Palestinian woman was wounded and lost her baby during fighting between Israeli troops and militants in the Ain Beit Alma refugee camp in Nablus, local medical officials said. Residents of the camp said Maha Katoumi, 30, had been shot and wounded by Israeli soldiers who fired at militants attacking them with explosives. (Reuters)

Israel radio reported that Israeli forces had arrested 15 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

Undercover Israeli special forces entered the southern Gaza Strip, near the Sufa crossing, and arrested two Palestinians. In a separate incident, Israeli ships bombarded the northern shore of the Gaza Strip, but no injuries were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni held talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Cairo in the first high-level discussion between Israel and the Arab world on the Arab Peace Initiative. According to a statement by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Mr. Aboul Gheit announced at the end of the meeting that it was the intention of the Arab League preparatory team, which included the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Jordan, to visit Israel within the next few weeks as representatives of the Arab League. This would be the first visit by official representatives of the League in Israel. (AP, www.mfa.gov.il)

Jerusalem's Planning and Construction Committee had approved a plan to build three new settlements of 20,000 housing units in East Jerusalem. According to the Committee's Chairman, Deputy Mayor Yehoshua Pollack, the plan is intended to create continuity between Jerusalem and the "Etzion" settlement block south of the city, and between Jerusalem and the "Beit-El" settlement north of the city. (Ha'aretz)

A US official said that the Bush administration planned to issue assurances in the form of letters to banks and donors that could ease the flow of funds to an account

controlled by PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. But it was unclear whether the letters would include restrictions that would prevent Mr. Fayyad from using the funds to cover the expenses of the PA, Western diplomats and Israeli officials said. Mr. Fayyad is counting on using the PLO account to receive pledges from Arab League member States. "Our banking regulations generally do not apply to the PLO account. ... We are working with Salam Fayyad to clarify how entities might contribute to this account," said Micaela Schweitzer-Bluhm, public affairs officer at the US consulate in Jerusalem. She said the clarifications would be issued "in the next couple of days," but did not provide any details. (*Reuters*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [appointed](#), in their personal capacity, three international experts to begin the work of establishing the Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Appointed to the Board were: Harumi Hori of Japan, Matti Paavo Pellonpää of Finland and Michael F. Raboin of the United States. They would commence their mandated work on 14 May at the Office of the UN Register of Damage which would be established at the UN Office at Vienna. As a policymaking organ, the Board would establish the rules and regulations governing the work of the Office, determine eligibility criteria, categories of damage and the procedure of registration of claims, and would have the ultimate authority in determining the inclusion of claims in the Register. (*UN press release SG/A/1064-PAL2073*)

The Japanese *Yomiuri* newspaper reported that the Japanese Government had decided to resume economic assistance to the PA. Foreign Ministry officials would be dispatched in June to discuss with the Palestinian Government programmes to be funded by Japan's official development assistance. (*Yomiuri*)

EU diplomats said that EU foreign ministers were scheduled to meet with their counterparts from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia in Brussels on 14 May to discuss prospects for reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. (*DPA*)

11

Eight Palestinians were injured, including members of the Palestinian security forces, in separated armed clashes in Gaza City, Beit Lahia and the al-Tawam area, all in the northern Gaza Strip. Sources said confrontations erupted when unknown gunmen opened fire on a security patrol and seized one of their cars. During the exchange of fire, a Palestinian woman, who was inside her home, and another Palestinian civilian, were injured. (*BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Al Quds Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the launching of one home-made projectile into Ashkelon, barely missing a power plant. Another rocket exploded in an open field in the western Negev. No injuries were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Four protestors were injured in clashes with Israeli border police at Bil'in in a demonstration against the construction of the wall. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti condemned what he described as torture of Palestinian prisoners held in the Ofer prison. He said soldiers had attacked the Palestinian prisoners with dogs and tear gas. The detained minors were forced to stand outside in the rain and their belongings destroyed by the soldiers. He called on the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international institutions to investigate the practices in the prison. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would be prepared to enter into "serious talks" with a group of Arab League States over the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Arab proposal would be the focus of talks the following week between Jordan's King Abdullah II, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas. Mr. Peres also warned against missing a great opportunity for peace, as presented by Saudi King Abdullah in the Initiative. He said this was the first time a major Arab leader had supported a peace initiative over war strategies. King Abdullah II was scheduled to visit Ramallah on 13 May for talks with President Abbas. (*DPA, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, The New York Times, Reuters*)

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued a [statement](#) on the appointment of experts to the Board of the United Nations Register of Damage caused by the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Bureau expressed hope that the office of the Register of Damage would begin implementing GA resolution ES-10/17 without delay, thus fulfilling its important GA mandate. (*www.un.org/News, UN press release GA/PAL/1053*)

A broad cross-section of civil society who attended the UN Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held under the auspices of the Palestinian Rights Committee, in Pretoria, stressed the urgent need to press for the immediate resumption of the political dialogue between the two sides, and for renewed efforts to keep talks focused on ending the occupation and alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people. (*www.un.org/news, UN press release GA/PAL/1052*)

The US President [authorized](#) the use of \$29.5 million from the US Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to meet unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs, including refugee food needs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The amount of \$10 million would be provided to the UNRWA emergency appeal. (*www.state.gov*)

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Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha said, "We reached an agreement at dawn with our brothers from Fatah that calls for the withdrawal of the national security forces from the streets of Gaza where they were deployed on Thursday [10 May]." The Egyptian security delegation stationed in the Gaza Strip had brought the two sides together. Under the deal, both sides would pull gunmen off the streets and swap 14 hostages from Hamas being held by Fatah for at least six from Fatah held by Hamas. (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

In an interview with an Arabic-language newspaper, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni pledged further withdrawals from the West Bank to facilitate the creation of a Palestinian State but said that the process was hindered by the Palestinians' inability to rein in militants. (*AP*)

13

Four Palestinians were killed and 14 others were wounded in factional violence in the Gaza Strip. Two Fatah-aligned members were killed in an ambush by Hamas members. Gunmen opened fire on a vehicle in which 32-year-old Baha Abu Jarad, senior member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and his assistant Tawfik Al-Budi were travelling in Beit Lahia. Both died of their wounds following the attack. The killing of Abu Jarad was considered to be one of the most threatening events in the Hamas-Fatah dispute since the signing of the Mecca agreement. "Hamas has nothing to do with the assassination at all," commented Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha. Hours later, a Fatah gunman opened fire outside a mosque in Gaza City, killing 2 Hamas members and wounding 11 others, 3 of them seriously. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine called on the PA Presidency and Government to appoint a legal committee to investigate the assassinations. Clashes also erupted during Abu Jarad's funeral, leaving three people wounded. (*BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

In Nablus, a Palestinian youth was seriously wounded by unidentified gunmen. (*Ha'aretz*)

Three Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at the western Negev. One rocket started a blaze in a field on the Kibbutz Or Haner. Fire-fighting units rushed to the area and contained the fire. The Al Quds Brigades claimed responsibility for launching one of the rockets. (*Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli security cabinet agreed to authorize the broadening of IDF operations in the Gaza Strip, so long as these were in keeping with the current policies. They also postponed to next week further decisions on the nature of the army's offensive response to the Qassam rocket attacks on the Negev. Currently, the army would be allowed a freer hand in two types of activities: operating along the border fence and targeting Qassam rocket crews. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

The ambassadors from the US and the EU countries in Israel said they would not attend the celebrations on 16 May to mark the 40th anniversary of the "reunification" of Jerusalem. According to *Army Radio*, the envoy from Germany declined the invitation in the name of all EU States due to a dispute over the status of East Jerusalem. A short time later, US Ambassador Richard Jones also said he would not attend. (*Ha'aretz, Ynetnews*)

The scheduled visit of King Abdullah II of Jordan to Ramallah was called off at the last minute because of bad weather. Arrangements for another meeting would be made in the coming days, according to Nabil Abu Rudeineh, adviser to PA President Abbas. (*AP*)

According to Israeli media sources, Israel and the PA were working together on plans to establish five industrial parks. The parks were expected to provide hundreds of Palestinians with jobs, according to Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Efraim Sneh. The work on the park in Jenin and near Tulkarm in the West Bank had already begun. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

14

The death toll of Palestinian factional fighting rose to eight, in addition to some 50 injuries. Fatah member Mohammed Al-Absi was killed in clashes with Hamas. Mr. Al-Absi belonged to Fatah's special force and also served as a bodyguard to Fatah spokesman Maher Meqdad. Hamas militants also set fire on Mr. Meqdad's office. Medical sources said Anwar Salahiddin Ash-Sha'er, 25, was killed in Khan Yunis. Meanwhile, hospital officials said a Palestinian civilian, shot in factional

fighting a day earlier, had died of his wounds. (*Ha'aretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested 10 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: six Fatah and Hamas members in Ramallah and surrounding areas, and four others in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Interior Minister Hani Qawasmî resigned amid the deadliest outbreak of factional fighting in the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh accepted the resignation. The issue would be discussed in a cabinet meeting today, according to Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti. At a news conference, Mr. Qawasmî accused both Prime Minister Haniyeh and President Abbas for failing to support him. His plan, which called for reforms and coordination among the numerous Palestinian security forces, never got off the ground. Officials said Mr. Haniyeh would take control of the Interior Ministry until a replacement for Mr. Qawasmî was found. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said that talk that his organization wanted the Government to themselves was false. He said, "We are keen on the National Unity Government. The problem is not between us and Fatah. The international community should (perceive) the great difference between Hamas' capturing a soldier in the battlefield, which is enshrined in international law, and what Israel is doing – arresting women, children and men, most of whom are civilians." Separately, Mr. Mashaal said he believed *BBC* reporter Alan Johnston was still alive and hoped that he would be released very soon. (*AFP*)

Speaking before the Israeli Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that an Arab peace plan was no substitute for direct negotiations with the Palestinians, and urged Arab leaders to prod the Palestinians into making concessions to Israel. (*AP*)

The following are excerpts from a [press release](#) issued by the Council of the European Union: "In a joint informal meeting in the margins of the Council, [EU foreign ministers] met, for the first time, with a delegation of the Arab League composed of the League's Secretary-General, the foreign ministers of Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria, and a representative from Egypt. The Arab League delegation presented the Arab Peace Initiative to EU foreign ministers. After a discussion, both sides agreed to follow up on the meeting by continuing to work together with a view to supporting efforts towards a settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to enhancing cooperation between the EU and the Arab League." (www.consilium.europa.eu)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told a press conference after the meeting between EU foreign ministers and Arab League leaders: "The opportunities provided by the present situation ... must be exploited and we must convert this opportunity into greater political dynamism, which is essential to resolve this conflict." EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, speaking of progress towards the establishment of a "functioning" Palestinian Government, said that it was time to start reflecting on when to renew formal relations, and hinted that the matter might be taken up at the next EU foreign ministers' meeting in June. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner also said discussions with PA Foreign Minister Ziyad Abu Amr had confirmed the positive movements on the Palestinian side. One European diplomat said, "We are moving progressively, step by step, towards a renewal of direct aid [to the Palestinian government]." (*AFP*)

EU External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said that the EU should do more to encourage the Palestinian Unity Government, while stopping short of signalling any plans to resume direct aid. She urged Israel to release Palestinian customs revenues it had been withholding and Arab countries to provide funds they had promised. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Saudi Fund for Development had [increased](#) its contribution to UNRWA by \$9 million for a project to re-house over 3,500 refugees in Rafah. The total donation of \$39 million would fund 752 dwelling units for Palestine refugees whose homes in Rafah had been demolished during the second intifada. The contribution would also fund the construction of public buildings - four schools, a health clinic, a community centre with a market area and a mosque. (*UNRWA press release no. Gaza/2007*)

The Department for International Development of the United Kingdom [announced](#) a further contribution of £3 million to the Temporary International Mechanism to meet the basic needs of Palestinians. (www.dfid.gov.uk)

A senior United States official said that the US had offered new assurances that providing money to the PLO would not violate US financial sanctions. He said the assurances had been included in an exchange of letters with the European Union and were aimed at calming bankers' fears and easing the flow of funds to a PLO account controlled by PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. "We have come to an agreement. This will be an important benefit for Fayyad who is operating that separate PLO account. ... The letters constitute the assurances they were seeking," the official said. But he stressed that US financial restrictions on the Palestinian Government would remain firmly in place. (*Reuters*)

A study conducted by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem found that more than a thousand apartments in central Hebron had been left by their Palestinian residents and over 1,800 commercial shops had been closed in recent years. The "massive exit" of Palestinians was due to Israel's policy of separation based on national-ethnic origin, according to their press release. As a result, Hebron's city centre had turned into a ghost town. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.btslem.org)

15

A 16-year-old Palestinian was shot and injured when Israeli troops stormed the Jenin refugee camp, shooting towards houses. (*Wafa*)

Eight members of the Palestinian Presidential Guard linked to Fatah were killed in an attack by Hamas gunmen near the Kami (Al-Muntar) crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Two Fatah men who fled the scene of the attack were shot by Israeli soldiers on the border. The IDF spokesman's office confirmed that the soldiers had shot at two armed men approaching the border fence, killing one and wounding the other. The attack began when Hamas gunmen fired a missile at a jeep carrying members of Fatah-affiliated security forces. When the jeep overturned, the gunmen fired at the men inside, killing eight of them. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

While in Jordan to participate in a conference of Nobel laureates in Petra, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert called on 22 leaders of Arab nations to convene and invite Israel to negotiate the Saudi peace plan without preconditions. "We heard about the Arab peace initiative and we say come and present it to us. You want to talk to us about it, we are ready to sit down and talk about it carefully," he told reporters. Jordan's King Abdullah told Mr. Olmert during their meeting that Israel first had to take concrete steps to improve relations with the Palestinians, and stressed first and foremost that talking about new settlements and expanding existing ones was in contradiction to Israel's desire for peace, according to Amjad Adayleh, Director of the Information Department at the Royal Palace. Mr. Olmert told the King that such reports were baseless, according to Mr. Adayleh. (*Ha'aretz*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross, in a confidential report about East Jerusalem and its surrounding areas leaked to *The New York Times*, accused Israel of a general disregard for its obligations under international humanitarian law - and the law of occupation in particular. The Committee said Israel was using its rights as an occupying power under international law in order to further its own interests or those of its own population to the detriment of the population of the occupied territory. With the construction of the separation barrier, the establishment of an outer ring of Jewish settlements beyond the expanded municipal boundaries and the creation of a dense road network linking the different Israeli neighbourhoods and settlements in and outside Jerusalem, the report stated, Israel was reshaping the development of the Jerusalem metropolitan area with far-reaching humanitarian consequences, including the increasing isolation of Palestinians living in Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and the increasing difficulty for some Palestinians in reaching Jerusalem's schools and hospitals. (*The New York Times*)

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General conveyed his intention to appoint Michael C. Williams of the United Kingdom as his Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Williams previously served as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Situation in the Middle East. (*UN News Centre*)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a [report](#) that the electrical capacity in the Gaza Strip remained insufficient and power cuts would ensue in the coming weeks, coinciding with the summer peak demand. Solutions to the problem were available, but the Palestinian Energy Fund did not have the necessary funds, according to the report. (www.ochaopt.org)

16

Hamas and Fatah members fought heavy battles throughout Gaza City, killing at least 21 people. An Israeli helicopter launched missiles at a Hamas command center

in the southern Gaza Strip, killing at least five people, after Hamas had fired 31 Qassam rockets into Israel, about a third of which struck Sderot. Policemen from the PA preventive security forces had arrested five Hamas members and were driving them through Gaza City when their vehicle was ambushed by Hamas gunmen, fatally shooting two policemen and mistakenly killing the five Hamas members. In another clash, a Hamas member was killed and a nurse travelling in an ambulance was shot in the head after being caught in the crossfire, hospital officials said. While a group of some 200 Palestinians marched through central Gaza City waving Palestinian flags and demanding an end to the fighting, masked gunmen used the cover of the demonstration to improve their positions on the street, and then opened fire on the demonstrators, wounding eight people, one critically. In Gaza City, Hamas members set fire to an 11-story apartment building housing Fatah PLC member, Nema Sheik Ali, after they had broken into her apartment, beat her up and two of her children, witnesses said. Hamas members also launched mortars and pipe bombs at the house of PA Preventive Security chief in the Gaza Strip Rashid Abu Shbak, before storming inside and killing six bodyguards, Palestinian medical officials said. Mr. Abu Shbak and his family were not home at the time of the attack. Fire burned close to PA President Abbas' compound, which had been targeted by Hamas mortar fire overnight. "What is happening in Gaza, endangers not only the unity Government, but also the Palestinian social fabric, the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian strategy as a whole", said PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat. (AP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters, Ynetnews)

Hamas targeted Israel for a second day, firing home-made rockets into the southern town of Sderot. One person was seriously wounded and power was briefly cut off in the area. (AP)

Israeli forces arrested 12 Palestinians in Nablus and Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

Prime Minister Olmert held a security consultation to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and the upsurge in rocket attacks on Israel. "Prime Minister Olmert, Defence Minister Peretz and Foreign Minister Livni decided to allow the IDF and the security establishment to carry out a series of actions in order to hit those who launch Qassam missiles and their commanders, to disrupt launch capabilities and to strike at terrorist infrastructures. The Prime Minister made it clear that Israel cannot continue to show restraint when its citizens are being attacked; therefore, a harsh and severe response was decided upon," the Prime Minister's office said in a statement. (www.pmo.gov.il)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General is profoundly concerned at the escalation of violence in Gaza, and the growing number of casualties. The deadly factional fighting has included unacceptable attacks on Palestinian Authority installations, institutions and personnel, and endangers civilians throughout Gaza. Equally unacceptable is the firing by Palestinian militants of rockets into Israel, targeting and injuring civilians.

The Secretary-General calls on all Palestinian factions to cease immediately all acts of violence. He calls on President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and the Palestinian Authority Government to bring violence to an end and restore calm. He underlines the obligations on all parties involved to act in strict accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law, and to ensure that humanitarian operations can continue without impediment.

(UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/10997-PAL/2074)

King Abdullah II of Jordan warned that the exchanges between Fatah and Hamas loyalists would rebound "on the future of Palestine." In an interview published by the Amman daily *Al-Arab Al-Yawm*, the King cautioned both sides that Israel would be the only beneficiary of the fighting. "I am very worried about the internal Palestinian disputes which serve only Israeli interests and I fear that, if the disputes continue, they will have negative repercussions on progress in the negotiations ... Time is running out between Israel and the Palestinians", he said. The King also said that he had received an invitation to visit Israel. "If we feel that the visit will fulfil its goal in re-launching the peace process, then we will go, out of keenness to serve the Palestinian cause and building up a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East." (AFP, DPA)

PA President Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal spoke by telephone and agreed to work to end the violence, said PA Minister of Information Mustafa al-Barghouti. Moussa Abu Marzouk, deputy Hamas Political Bureau Chief, told AP that, "The international community and Arab countries should share the responsibility for the current events due to their attitudes toward the National Unity Government ... The continued financial and political siege has pushed matters to this simmering tension ... The Israelis are behind all these events ... The Arabs stand idle watching the Palestinian arena while it is on the verge of explosion under the siege ... This is a constant pressure that has led to a real explosion". (AP)

Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema and Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa called for a halt to the spiral of violence and civil war in Gaza. In a joint statement issued at a press conference in Rome, the two called for a return to calm in the territory, the cessation of fighting between Palestinians, and a halt to launching missiles towards Israel. The Italian Foreign Minister called for a halt to attacks directed at Israel, the return of soldier Shalit, and the suspension of new Israeli settlements. While condemning the situation, Mr. Moussa was critical of the "blocked situation imposed in an unfair manner on the Palestinians of Gaza and of the military occupation of their land ... we have to be vigilant and not lose sight of the reasons, the root causes, the situation of blockade, of starvation, of unemployment, a situation that has been imposed on the Palestinians unjustly, unfairly and led to this agitation". (AFP, AP)

The PLC convened in Ramallah to discuss the severe deterioration in the Gaza Strip. The lawmakers described the situation in the Gaza Strip as a national catastrophe and "a new Nakba" which would lead to the destruction of the Palestinian cause and the distortion of the Palestinian image around the world. (Ma'an News Agency)

After two months of training in Egypt, some 500 Palestinian security forces affiliated with Fatah returned to Gaza through the Rafah border crossing, security officials said. The troops had been sent to Egypt in mid-March for training at an Egyptian police camp in Alexandria, an Egyptian security official said, who also said that the forces were trained in the use of automatic rifles, curbing riots and on tactics of street battle control. (AP)

17

Some 13 Qassam rockets hit Israel's western Negev, one of which hit a high school building, lightly wounding two people. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli tanks crossed several dozen metres over the border into the northern Gaza Strip, an army spokesperson said. She said the force consisted of a very small number of tanks, which stopped very close to the border fence. She called the incursion routine and stressed that it was not the start of a ground offensive in Gaza. Military sources speaking on condition of anonymity said the tanks had crossed into Gaza for observation purposes. (DPA)

At least four Hamas members were killed in a series of strikes carried out by the Israeli Air Force in Gaza City. The Israeli Air Force hit a compound of Hamas' Executive Force in the city, killing one Hamas member and wounding dozens of people. In a second strike, the IAF fired missiles at a car, killing two Hamas members. Hamas said one of the dead had been a senior member of the group. The IAF later struck another Hamas position, killing at least one. Hamas' armed wing threatened to resume suicide bombings in Israel after the first strike. "This is an open war launched against Hamas. All options are open, including martyrdom operations," said Abu Ubaida, spokesman of the armed wing. Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal told the organization's *Al-Aqsa Television* that the air strikes had created an historic opportunity to unite Palestinian factions against Israel. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces apprehended a member of the Palestinian intelligence service north-east of Tulkarm. (Ma'an News Agency)

Three Palestinians, including a woman, were killed and more than 15 injured as clashes erupted between Hamas gunmen and members of the Preventive Security forces in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah. The clashes began following a funeral procession of a Hamas member killed the day before in factional violence. Palestinian medical sources identified the dead as Mahmoud Muammar, 25, member of the preventive security forces; Tha'er Abu Zeid, 22, member of Hamas' Executive Force; and Fadwa Younis, 22. The sources said that six of the injured were in critical condition. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas urged US Secretary of State Rice in a phone conversation to stop the Israeli military escalation against the Palestinian people and continue efforts to push the peace process forward. (WAFB)

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett in a statement expressed concern over the violence in the Gaza Strip. "I remain deeply worried by the continuing violence between militias in the Gaza Strip. We want to see the latest ceasefire take hold, for the sake of all the people of Gaza. I support President Abbas' efforts to achieve this. I also deplore rocket attacks from Gaza against Israel, attacks that are bringing suffering to Israeli civilians. ... I call on all parties to refrain from violence and to restore to the people of Gaza and nearby Israeli communities the security that they need and deserve," Ms. Beckett said. (AFP, www.fco.gov.uk)

King Abdullah II of Jordan, speaking before a gathering of Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian peace activists, urged the Palestinian factions to end the internal fighting in the Gaza Strip for the sake of the Palestinian people and for the sake of Palestine. (www.kingabdullah.jo)

Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that he deemed the Israeli military strikes in the Gaza Strip to be wanton violence and killing. (Xinhua)

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly issued in Tunis a final declaration which stated: "[Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly] praises the constitution of the Palestinian Government of National Unity and doesn't doubt that this Government will be committed in a program that reflects Quartet principles, hopes that this agreement could put finally an end to all armed confrontations and requests the two concerned parties to do their best in order to put an end to violence and maintain and extend the ceasefire." (www.europarl.europa.eu)

US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters: "We understand the Israeli Government has a right to defend itself and they have explained that their actions, just over the past day or so, have been in reaction to stopping -- trying to stop further rocket launches into Israeli territory, rocket launches that have injured Israeli citizens. But we've also urged them to consider the consequences of their actions in defending themselves on Palestinian infrastructure as well as on what effect it might have on the prospects for moving forward the political process." (www.state.gov)

President Bush said during a [joint press availability](#) with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair: "We're concerned about the violence we see in Gaza. We strongly urge the parties to work toward a two-State solution. I'm looking forward to continue to work on this issue. I've instructed my Secretary of State to be actively engaged... The Prime Minister and I discussed the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. We recognized the deep humiliation that can come as a result of living in a land where you can't move freely, and where people can't realize dreams." (www.whitehouse.gov)

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa Aziz Pahad said in a statement: "The South African Government therefore joins calls by both Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh for efforts to keep the Palestinian Government of national unity intact... the Palestinian infighting would complicate the quest for peace by drawing the attention away from this critical opportunity to take the peace process forward." (*Mail and Guardian*)

The US Government had advised the EU that aid funds could be channelled through a PLO account run by PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, *Ha'aretz* reported. "While our financial regulations with regard to transactions with the PA Government remain in place, these restrictions do not apply to the PLO," Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs C. David Welch reportedly wrote in the letter to the EU. EU officials said that they had no immediate plans to provide funds directly to the PLO account and would for now continue to pay allowances directly to PA workers through the Temporary International Mechanism. (*Ha'aretz*) Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu called on the Israeli Government to cut off power and water supplies in the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

18

The Islamic University campus in Gaza City became a scene of heavy fighting. Hamas officials said PA Presidential Guards were firing grenades at Hamas fighters.

A spokesman for the Guard denied that and accused Hamas of using the university as a fire base for attacks on nearby police stations. "We should unite against the occupation," he added. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said: "Israeli occupation forces are bombarding Hamas headquarters and the Presidential Guard is bombarding the Islamic University. We wonder where the Presidential Guard gets their orders." Prime Minister Olmert's spokeswoman Miri Eisin told *DPA*: "Israel has openly, consistently... supported the moderates and opposed Hamas." (*DPA, Reuters*)

A Palestinian hospital official said at least one Palestinian was killed and others were wounded when Israeli helicopter gunships fired on them after they had launched a rocket into Israel. The IDF said it had attacked the rocket crew in the northern Gaza Strip and that eight Qassam missiles had struck Israel. One hit a house in Sderot, another struck a synagogue. Three people were lightly injured by shrapnel and eight others treated for shock, medics said. (*DPA, Reuters*)

Four Hamas fighters were killed when their base near the Gaza Strip's eastern border with Israel was hit by what local officials said appeared to be at least one missile from an F-16 jet. (*Reuters*)

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told foreign ambassadors that the Government may decide on further military action within days and noted the Cabinet would meet as usual on Sunday. "For too long the international community took this situation in the southern part of Israel as acceptable, as part of life in Israel, and it is not. Enough is enough," Ms. Livni said. "We will see sustained and vibrant measures to end the rocket attacks and remove the threat to southern Israel," Government spokesman David Baker said. The IDF would continue attacking Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip for as long as necessary, a senior Israeli military official said, however, he expressed reservations regarding an extensive ground operation at this time. "We have to think from the end to the beginning," he said. "The question is where an operation like this places us on the day after." (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

"There can be no more delay," King Abdullah II of Jordan said, opening the three-day meeting of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea. He said three out of every five Palestinians could not find a job, and that hundreds of thousands were living in misery. "This suffocating situation has brought poverty, malnutrition, frustration and radicalization," he added. He stressed that the Arab Peace Initiative presented a "historic opportunity to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement." He warned that peace must be achieved during the year, before any more generations suffer, before any more destruction takes place. (*AP*)

King Abdullah II expressed his deep concern over the situation in the Gaza Strip, which had reached a critical phase following the Palestinian infighting and the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, in a telephone conversation with PA President Abbas. He called on all the Palestinian segments to unite, exercise self-restraint and put their differences aside. The King warned that the Israeli aggression would worsen the life of innocent Palestinians. (*Petra*)

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said in Kuala Lumpur that "all this violence must stop. The international community must intervene. I think the United Nations must intervene." (*AFP*)

The Brazilian Government expressed great concern over the violence between Palestinian factions, and rocket attacks on Israel. "Brazil's Government calls for the immediate cessation of those unacceptable acts and urges all parties involved to respect human rights, protect the civilian population and give up retaliative acts that would worsen the situation in the region," it said in a communiqué. (*Xinhua*)

The Palestinian-Israeli Business Council was launched on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Jordan by a group of key Palestinian and Israeli business leaders. The Council aims to advance the relationship between the two business communities and, ultimately, assist the region to move towards durable peace and coexistence. (*Petra*)

According to a report in *Ma'ariv*, King Abdullah II of Jordan had drawn up a new initiative to solve the Palestine question based on a confederation of Jordan and Palestine. The Palestinian-Jordanian United Kingdom would reportedly be comprised of two independent sovereign States. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

South Africa's acting Health Minister Jeff Radebe, attending the 60th World Health Assembly in Geneva, was quoted as saying that South Africa was poised to actively contribute to the work of the World Health Organization through the consolidated appeals process, to alleviate the widespread humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian Territory. He said that his country's Parliament was about to finalize proposals on measures South Africa would take to support this appeal process. (*Xinhua*)

19

A convoy carrying senior PA intelligence official Mohammad al-Masri came under fire in the Gaza Strip, security sources said. (*Reuters*)

An Israeli air strike killed a Palestinian in the northern Gaza Strip town of Jabaliya, PA security and medical officials said. Hamas said the dead person was a teenager who did not belong to its ranks. The IDF said its aircraft had struck a three-person squad that had just fired a rocket at a southern Israel. (*AP*)

Hamas and Fatah factions reached a new ceasefire agreement, officials announced, pledging to pull fighters off the streets and exchange hostages. Gunmen climbed down from rooftop positions and residents began venturing out of their homes in Gaza City. "We hope that the Palestinians will respect the ceasefire concluded under Egyptian auspices," Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said. "Whoever fires a rocket when dozens of rockets and bombs come back in response is always going to be the loser," he warned. "We therefore appeal to the Palestinians to halt their rocket fire and we call on Israel not to resort to force against the Palestinians." (*AFP, AP*)

Saudi diplomat Turki Al-Faisal Al Saud told reporters at the World Economic forum in Jordan: "Our Palestinian brothers have to stop fighting not just with each other. I would also call on them to stop fighting Israel with military methods." (*DPA*)

"In today's circumstances -- the infighting in Gaza -- it is extremely difficult to make the case for a public appeal for the Palestinians," Peter Ford, Senior Fundraiser of UNRWA, told participants at the World Economic Forum meeting. "What is happening in Gaza and to a lesser extent, the West Bank, today is impacting the readiness of Arab publics to give," he said. (*AP*)

20

Some 15 rockets hit the Sderot area. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli warplanes fired missiles at a car carrying Hamas militants and a load of weapons, killing three people, then demolished two arms factories belonging to Hamas, the IDF said. (*AP*)

The IDF fired a missile at the house of Hamas lawmaker Khalil al-Haya in Gaza City killing 8 people, including 6 civilians. (AP)

According to a statement during a meeting of Israel's Security Cabinet, it was decided to increase operations to reduce the firing of rockets and to knock out the terrorist infrastructure responsible for the firings. Also according to the statement, the operations would concentrate at that stage on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which were responsible for the escalation, and even more drastic measures would be considered if the latest measures had failed to end the rocket attacks. The Cabinet, however, had for the moment opted not to order a ground assault, according to a senior official who had attended the meeting. (AFP, www.pmo.gov.il) Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz declared a "special home front situation" in areas adjacent to the Gaza Strip. The special situation status is a level below a state of emergency. (DPA)

"We remain concerned about the violence and urge all sides to demonstrate appropriate restraint," US National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe told reporters in Crawford, Texas. However, he noted that Hamas needed to stop firing rockets into Israel. (AFP)

Pope Benedict XVI appealed to Palestinian leaders to promote the difficult path to unity through dialogue and determination during a prayer in St. Peter's Square in Rome. He also called on the Israeli Government to exercise moderation with reference to the air strikes. "I also appeal to the international community to step up their efforts to [bring about] new talks," the Pontiff said. (DPA)

"Hamas is preparing for a new escalation, not only with rockets but through high-quality attacks such as suicide bombings, attacks using tunnels and kidnappings of soldiers," a senior Israeli Government official quoted Defence Minister Amir Peretz as telling the weekly Cabinet meeting. (AFP)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres said that his Government would offer a counterproposal to the Arab Peace Initiative. He urged Arab leaders to meet with Israel to discuss the issue. (AP)

"The Palestinian resistance, especially Hamas and its Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, will keep up launching home-made missiles on the Israeli settlements and communities," Sami Abu Zuhri, Hamas spokesman, told reporters in the Gaza Strip. "Our rockets are fired in response to the crimes of the Israeli occupation and Olmert's threats will not terrify us," he added. (Xinhua)

Saudi Prince Al-waleed bin Talal bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud pledged \$411,000 to support UNRWA's Medical Training Programme in the Gaza Strip. (www.unrwa.org)

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Four Qassam rockets hit the area of Sderot, one of them damaging a road. No injuries were reported. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli missile struck a car carrying four Islamic Jihad men in the Gaza Strip, killing all of them. A spokesman for the group said they were targeted just after they had launched rockets into Israel. Islamic Jihad spokesman Abu Ahmed said that the Zionist attack would not stop rocket fire against Zionist towns and that leaders of the Zionist enemy would pay a price. (AP, Ha'aretz)

Israeli air strikes killed a Hamas militant and hit suspected weapons storage facilities in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army said. (AP)

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit a car in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, setting it on fire. A 35-year-old Israeli woman, who was hit while approaching the car, died on the way to a hospital. Two other people were wounded. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. Hamas' military wing said it had fired 23 rockets during the day, including nine at Sderot. (AP)

An Israeli undercover unit arrested two members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

Four separation wall security guards fired at a group of five journalists who tried to approach people demonstrating against the wall near the "Efrat" settlement in the West Bank. (Ynetnews)

Lebanese Army artillery shelled the Nahr el-Bared Palestine refugee camp following gun battles in nearby Tripoli in which some 50 people, including Lebanese soldiers and Fatah Islam militants, had died. Lebanese officials said one of the militants killed was a suspect in a failed German train bombing. Another Palestine refugee camp, Ein el-Hilweh in southern Lebanon, was tense after Lebanese troops had surrounded it and armed militants went on alert. (AFP, AP)

Three masked men stormed a building in the town of Khan Yunis and shot two men from Hamas, wounding one seriously, Hamas and security officials said. Hamas blamed Fatah for the attack, but the incident did not spark more factional fighting. (AP)

The following statements were issued by the Spokesperson of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General hopes that the ceasefire reached among Palestinian factions in Gaza holds, and he thanks Egypt for its vital work in brokering this agreement.

He calls on the Palestinian Authority to take the necessary steps to restore law and order, and for all factions to abide by the ceasefire.

At the same time, the Secretary-General is deeply concerned that Palestinian militants continue to fire rockets at Israel, targeting civilians. These attacks are completely unacceptable, and violate international law.

The Secretary-General is also deeply concerned by the mounting number of civilian casualties from Israeli military operations, especially the targeted attack on the home of a Hamas legislator in Gaza, which killed six members of one family. While recognizing Israel's right to defend itself, he calls on Israel to abide by international law and to ensure that its actions do not target civilians or put them at undue risk.

(UN press release SG/SM/11002-PAL/2075)

The Secretary-General is gravely concerned about the fighting in the last two days between Fatah al-Islam gunmen and the Lebanese army. The actions of Fatah al-Islam are an attack on Lebanon's stability and sovereignty. The Secretary-General welcomes the united stand taken by Palestinian factions in Lebanon denouncing these attacks on the Lebanese army. He calls on all sides to do their utmost to protect innocent civilians.

The Secretary-General also strongly condemns yesterday's terrorist bombing in Beirut. He urges the Lebanese to unite in the face of threats to their stability and security.

(UN press release SG/SM/11003)

The Fatah movement condemned the Palestinian militants battling Lebanese Government troops. "The so-called Fatah Islam has nothing to do with the movement of Fatah or the other Palestinian factions and it is not part of the PLO," the movement said in a statement. "Fatah calls upon our refugee people in the refugee camps of Beddawi and Nahr el-Bared to isolate this group." (AP)

In an interview with *Army Radio*, Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter said: "[Hamas Political Bureau Chief] Khaled Mashaal isn't immune, not in Damascus and not anywhere else. I'm convinced that at the first opportunity, we will bid him farewell." An aide told AP that he was expressing his personal opinion, not Government policy. (AP)

"All the while insisting on the right of our people to legitimate defence, we reiterate our offer of a comprehensive ceasefire, simultaneous and reciprocal," PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti told a news conference in Ramallah. "This comprehensive ceasefire should extend to all Palestinian territories - to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," he said. (AFP)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana headed to the Middle East on an unscheduled visit. "Everybody has to stop," he told reporters before leaving EU headquarters. "There are too many theatres opening and we have to make an effort to close them. I'll see if it's possible to calm down the violent situation which has resumed everywhere in such a disproportionate manner," he added. "We will see if we can resume the political process."

Asked if the EU was envisaging deploying peacekeepers to Gaza, he said, "I don't think that anybody is going to ask for that, but if anybody asks for that then we will consider." He will visit Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lebanon and Egypt during his four-day trip. (AP)

"[PA] Finance Minister Fayyad has now structured a financial account by which we can channel our support," Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said.

Mr. Støre said that Norway soon would transfer \$10 million to that account. He urged others to follow. (AP)

"France strongly condemns the continued firing of rockets from Gaza and appeals to the various Palestinian groups to observe the ceasefire which was concluded with the Israeli side on 26 November," Foreign Ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei said during a regular press briefing. "The situation remains very volatile within the Palestinian territories and in the face of the alarming increase in the number of civilian victims, we call on Israeli authorities to act with the greatest restraint in order to avoid ushering in a new era of a pointless cycle of violence," the spokesman said. Responding to a question concerning the threats of Israel to eliminate Khaled Mashaal, the spokesman said that France constantly condemned the practice of extrajudicial killings as that was contrary to international law." (Xinhua)

"Japan strongly urges both Israel and Palestinians to maintain utmost self-restraint to avoid further exacerbating the situation," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Japan expresses its deep regret over the rocket attacks by Palestinian militias onto Israeli territory," it said. "It also calls for Israel to avoid harming the lives of innocent Palestinians and their social infrastructure." (AFP)

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Seven rockets were fired at Israel, lightly wounding two people, the IDF said. Israel responded with four air strikes, targeting two suspected weapons depositories and two Hamas camps in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian officials said seven people had been wounded. (AP)

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians in Hebron, three in Ramallah and one in Nablus. Israeli forces also arrested 17 Palestinians in Bethlehem during an arrest campaign in search of Islamic Jihad members. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz called for increased international pressure on Hamas to halt their Qassam rocket fire. He warned that Israel was currently responding to ongoing Qassam attacks from the Gaza Strip with self-restraint, but that it may target PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and launch a ground offensive in Gaza if international pressure was not exerted on Hamas to cease attacks. "Now this is a test for European diplomacy. It is a test for U.S. diplomacy. It is a test for the diplomacy of the free world. If the rockets do not stop, we will not stop," Mr. Peretz told reporters during a joint conference with EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. Mr. Peretz also asked the EU to renew its sanctions on the Palestinian Authority and Hamas and not to release frozen funds. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli authorities handed demolition notifications to dozens of Palestinians in Jerusalem, explaining that they did not have building licences. (Wafa)

Asked if PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh was on Israel's hit list, Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Ephraim Sneh told *Israel Radio*: "I'll put it like this: There is no one who is in the circle of commanders and leaders in Hamas who is immune from a strike." (Ha'aretz)

Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas official in Gaza, said in response to Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Sneh's hint that Israel could target PA Prime Minister Haniyeh that, "Any harm to Mr. Haniyeh or any Hamas leader would mean a change in the rules of the game and the occupation [Israel] must be ready to pay an unprecedented price." (Ha'aretz)

In response to a Israeli top official's hint that Israel could target PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, US State Department Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey urged Israel to weigh the consequences both in terms of the possibilities for continued political dialogue as well as what other kinds of reactions there might be. (Ha'aretz)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana held a meeting with Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz in Jerusalem, the day after he met with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in Sderot. Mr. Peretz said, "If the international community does not stop the terror organizations, we will find ourselves in a situation where the Palestinian Authority will completely disintegrate." In a [statement](#) released by his office, Mr. Solana said, "The violence must stop in all theatres. I hope we can create the conditions for a horizon of peace. We need a political dialogue to solve the crisis. We want to help calm the situation and see if it is possible to move in establishing a political perspective. This is the only solution." (Ha'aretz, www.consilium.europa.eu)

23

Israeli warplanes fired missiles at a house in the Gaza Strip city of Jabalya, wounding eight Palestinians, including an infant and a woman, witnesses said. Israeli warplanes also destroyed an empty house belonging to the al Na'our family. Another air raid was also conducted on a brick factory, east of Gaza City and targeted several other sites, resulting in a number of injuries and damage. (Wafa)

A Palestinian, Abed al-Ra'ouf al-Jila, 63, died of wounds he had sustained two days ago when Israeli helicopters shot at him as he was sitting near his house in the al-Nasser area in Gaza City, medical sources at al-Shafa Hospital said. (Wafa)

IDF soldiers arrested 13 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In Gaza, the Special Israeli Squad, under air cover, entered Khaza'ah town, east of Khan Yunis and arrested seven members of the Qdeih family. Witnesses said that Israeli soldiers imposed a siege on the area for more than three hours and spread fear and panic among children and women. In Nablus, Israeli soldiers launched a search campaign in Tel village, south of Nablus, arresting five Palestinians. Israeli troops also entered the new Asker refugee camp, arresting Ali Gheith, security sources said. (Wafa)

An IDF soldier was shot and lightly wounded north of the Gaza Strip while engaging in a military operation there. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF entered a primary girls' school in Hebron, local sources said, and confiscated a number of computers and students' files. The soldiers vandalized school property. (Wafa)

The PA Ministry of Health said in a report that Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip reached the highest rate in a week, killing 37 Palestinians and wounding more than 100 others, including 30 children. The Director General of the Emergency Unit in the Ministry, Muawiya Hassanein, said that Israel had used internationally prohibited weapons. The Ministry called on the international community and the United Nations to impose sanction on Israel to compel it to halt its attacks against the Palestinian people. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh met in the Gaza Strip in an effort to restore a ceasefire with Israel. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Haniyeh's political advisor Ahmed Yousef said that the Palestinians would not agree to a truce limited to the Gaza Strip and that did not include the West Bank. The talks between Messrs. Abbas and Haniyeh also touched on strengthening the latest ceasefire between the Palestinian factions. (AP, Ha'aretz)

In Lebanon hundreds of Palestinian refugees carrying their belongings fled the besieged Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, taking advantage of a truce that mostly held overnight. About 15,000 Palestinians, nearly half the camp's residents, left the night before, officials said. Those fleeing reported bodies littering Nahr el-Bared's streets and scenes of blasted buildings and destruction. UN officials said the bodies of at least 20 camp residents had been retrieved. (AP)

In a press release issued in Paris, Reporters Without Borders condemned Israeli army raids on five Palestinian radio and TV stations in Nablus. They also condemned the removal of computers and equipment by Israeli soldiers, forcing some stations to stop broadcasting. (Wafa)

The Quartet would meet in Berlin on 30 May, a German Foreign Ministry spokesman said. "We are greatly concerned about the latest violence and escalation in the Gaza Strip and in parts of Lebanon," Spokesman Jens Ploettner told a Government news conference, adding that he expected that a discussion on the situation would be an important part of the Quartet meeting, together with a coordination of efforts to bring about a de-escalation in the region. (Reuters)

Maj-Gen. Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator to the PA, called the current situation in the Gaza Strip "anarchy." Speaking before the US House on Foreign Affairs in Washington, General Dayton added that Hamas was striving to destroy Israel, all the while trying to dispense with all forces loyal to PA President Abbas. He also said Hamas was receiving aid from Syria and Iran. (Ha'aretz)

British gas producer BG Group said that it was making progress in talks about supplying Palestinian gas to Israel found off the Gaza Strip coast, but political tensions remained an obstacle to a potential deal. (Ha'aretz)

24

A Palestinian farmer working in his field in the northern Gaza Strip was killed by Israel fire, residents and hospital officials said. The IDF confirmed that tanks had fired at areas in the northern Gaza Strip from which Palestinian militants fired Qassam rockets at Israel. Also, IDF naval fire killed a Palestinian fisherman. The IDF confirmed that the navy had opened fire on an abandoned fishing boat which had moved beyond the permitted sailing zone, and they said they were investigating the incident. (Ha'aretz)

Six Palestinians were injured in an Israeli air strike. Witnesses said that Israeli fighter jets launched an air strike on a military post in the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in Gaza City, completely destroying it. Hospital officials said those injured were passers-by. Earlier, Israeli jets launched a series of raids on several targets in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the injury of four Palestinians and damaging many Palestinian properties. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli Air Force had so far carried out eight strikes against targets in the Gaza Strip, among them Hamas headquarters and weapons silos. Palestinian officials reported that 17 Gaza residents were wounded in the strikes. Hospital officials said that a pregnant woman and a teenage boy were among the wounded. All through the Shavuot holiday on 22 and 23 May, the IDF imposed a full closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Militants from the Gaza Strip fired 13 Qassam rockets into Israel during the past two days, resulting in damage but causing no casualties. Four rockets were fired into the western Negev, one hitting a stable in a kibbutz and killing a horse. Another rocket landed in an open field in Sderot and two others in open areas near the city. No damage or casualties were reported. Another rocket landed in Sderot. (Ha'aretz)

More than 33 senior Hamas officials were detained by Israeli forces in overnight raids in the West Bank. Those taken, mainly in Nablus, included the PA Minister of Education Nasr al-Sha'ir, former cabinet minister Abdul Rahman Zeidan, two lawmakers and the mayors of Nablus, Qalqilya and Beita. Two PLC members from Nablus, Messrs. Hamid Bitawi and Raid Abu Sir, and one from Tulkarm were also among the detained. The Israeli military said that the detentions were made because the officials supported the firing of rockets into Israel. (AFP, BBC, DPA, Ma'an News Agency)

Speaking to *Army Radio*, Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz defended the arrest of Hamas officials. "Arrests are better than shooting. The arrest ... sends a message to the armed organizations that we demand that this firing stop." Hamas threatened new attacks after the arrests. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas said that he was in touch with Palestinian factions on bringing an end to their "absurd" Qassam rocket attacks on Israel and trying to secure a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip that could be extended to the West Bank. "We don't need them [the rockets]. They must stop so we can reach a mutual truce with Israel in Gaza as well as in the West Bank," he said. Mr. Abbas also criticized the IDF reprisal raids. (Ha'aretz)

Despite the sharp decline in the number of Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip in the past two days, senior IDF officers warned the Cabinet that agreeing to a temporary ceasefire would help Hamas amass military strength and extend the range of its ballistics capabilities. Thirteen rockets had been fired at Israel in the past two days. Some cabinet members agree with the IDF that Israel must make Hamas pay for the death of the Israeli woman who was hit in Sderot on 21 May.

(Ha'aretz)

Israel agreed to the extensive training of members of the Presidential Guard of PA Mahmoud Abbas in areas near Jericho, in the Jordan Valley. The Presidential Guard had been undergoing similar training in Egypt. The request for Israel to permit such extensive training was made through the US. (Ha'aretz)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

(UN press release SC/9025)

In a joint press conference with EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, President Abbas said, "We have spoken about the Israeli air raids, and the arrests, in addition to the attacks which are ongoing in the West Bank." He also said Mr. Solana was doing his duty, across all fields, in order to guarantee the return of calm to the Gaza Strip, with the Israelis or the Americans." (Ma'an News Agency)

The Council of the EU [adopted](#), by written procedure, the extension for a year, until 24 May 2008, of the mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. A number of disagreements remained over the nature of the Border Assistance Mission mandate. Israel had alluded to the fact that the mandate of enforcement should be broadened. (Ha'aretz, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom/>)

Commenting on the arrests of 33 Hamas leaders in Israeli raids in the West Bank, US State Department spokesman Tom Casey said, "Certainly Hamas is a foreign terrorist organization engaged in terrorist attacks against Israel. But we have previously noted when these kinds of issues came up before, that the detention of elected members of the Palestinian Government and legislature does raise particular concerns." Mr. Casey underscored the US position that "while we understand and respect Israel's need to defend itself, we do wish to have them take into consideration the consequences of their actions." Such consequences include the "effect on the ability to promote the kind of dialogue that we want to see happen, and that would ultimately be able to lead to a two-State solution that the Israelis favour, that President Abbas favours, and that we have certainly been trying to achieve." "This is an issue that raises particular concerns for us, but I'm not going to try and offer any prescriptions to them," he added. (AFP, www.state.gov)

The union of Palestinian public sector workers announced that 26 and 27 May would be days of "comprehensive strike, in protest against the absence of regular payment of salaries to the employees." In a statement, the union warned against the use of labour unions for political and factional purposes or goals. (Ma'an News Agency)

Congress of South African Trade Unions President Willie Madisha called for the South African Government to cease all diplomatic relations with Israel after its attacks on the Palestinian leadership. Mr. Madisha said the best way to have Israel comply with UN resolutions on the question of Palestine was to step up pressure by a global diplomatic boycott such as the one imposed on apartheid South Africa. The Congress of South African Trade Unions leader was speaking at a media briefing of the coalition End the Occupation Campaign, formed to coordinate a week of action with activities around the world on the 40th anniversary of the occupation. (Business Day/All Africa Global Media)

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Two members of the military wing of Hamas were killed in a missile strike on their vehicle in the eastern part of Gaza City, Palestinian medical sources said. A third militant, who had initially been pronounced dead, showed no sign of brain activity but doctors were still trying to save him, Dr. Jumaa al-Saqua of the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City told AFP. The IDF would only confirm "an aerial attack against a vehicle transporting terrorists in Shujaia district." (AFP)

Israeli aircraft attacked a guard post at the Gaza home of PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, witnesses said, but the IDF denied Mr. Haniyeh was the target. Four Palestinians, including a child, were wounded in the raid. Hamas warned Israel against any attempt to assassinate Haniyeh or any other Hamas leader. Abu Ubaida, spokesman for the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, warned: "Any attack against our political or military leaders would add to the uncertainty over the fate of soldier Shalit." (AFP)

In all, Israeli aircraft launched seven sorties overnight in the space of 90 minutes, most of them against Hamas targets. Other targets attacked by Israel included buildings operated by the Executive Force, a money-changing office and a suspected weapons workshop. The IDF said it attacked two Hamas posts in Gaza City and Khan Yunis, three buildings operated by Hamas in the northern Gaza Strip and a business involved in transferring funds to terror organisations, as well as a weapons-manufacturing facility used by Islamic Jihad in Rafah. (AFP, DPA)

Three Israelis were lightly wounded in a Qassam rocket attack on Sderot. The injured people were inside their home when a rocket hit the four-story apartment building, which suffered serious damage. Another 10 people were sent to hospital for shock, the report said. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it fired two rockets, one of which hit the house. At least five Qassam rockets were reportedly fired at the western Negev in the morning, causing no injuries but setting ablaze a wheat field near Sderot. (AP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

IDF troops at the Huwwara Checkpoint near Nablus arrested a Palestinian who was carrying three pipe bombs in his bag. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

Abbas Momani, a 33-years-old Palestinian AFP photographer covering a rally against Israel's separation barrier in the village of Bilin in the West Bank, was shot and wounded in the head when Israeli soldiers fired rubber bullets at a group of journalists. Israeli troops had earlier ordered them to leave the area. Mr. Momani was rushed to hospital in nearby Ramallah, where he had seven stitches put on his wound. (AFP)

PA President Abbas presented a plan, under which Gaza militants would halt what he called futile rocket fire for a month to allow for negotiations on a more comprehensive truce that would include the West Bank. After a meeting, the militant groups initially asked for 48 hours to consider the proposal and respond.

Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha said the rockets were the "means to defend our people against the enemy, which must first put an end to its crimes. We will not consider a proposed truce before Israel stops its killings." (AFP, AP)

Commenting on efforts to broker a prisoner exchange between Israel and Palestinian militants, Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told reporters in Cairo that these efforts were currently suspended because the fighting among the Palestinians seriously complicated the situation. (AFP)

The Gaza Strip border crossing with Egypt was reopened after Israel relaxed a security alert that had kept it closed for 12 days. (AP)

An EU Presidency statement [condemned](#) Palestinian missile attacks on Israel and asked the Israeli Government to avoid inflicting civilian casualties when retaliating.

It called on the PA Government to do everything it could to stop Qassam missiles fired from the Gaza Strip. "The Presidency is shocked by the death of innocent civilians on both sides caused by the violence during the last few days," the statement added. "The Presidency has noted with concern the arrest of members of the Palestinian Government and Legislative Council. Such measures are liable to make the dialogue between the two sides, which is so urgently needed, more difficult." The statement said both sides should do everything in their power to help calm the situation. (DPA, www.eu2007.de)

26

Five Palestinians were killed and eight wounded in a succession of four morning air raids on buildings used by the Hamas Executive Force. One of the Israeli airstrikes hit a Hamas base in Gaza City used by the Executive Force, killing five Hamas members and wounding four. Two rooms in the camp were destroyed and a nearby charity was badly damaged in the strike. Earlier in the day, two missiles hit close to PA Prime Minister Haniyeh's house in the Shati refugee camp on the outskirts of Gaza City. One landed around 100 yards away and the other 300 yards away, hitting trailers used by Mr. Haniyeh's bodyguards. The IDF confirmed the Shati strikes but said Haniyeh was not a target. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

A Hamas member wounded in a recent attack died of his injuries, raising to 46 the number of Gazans killed in Israeli air strikes since 16 May. (AFP)

Two armed Palestinians were killed when they opened fire on an Israeli police patrol in the village of Sheikh Saad, between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Israeli police and ambulance services said two Israeli officers were wounded. A third Palestinian, uninvolved in the attack, was killed in the crossfire. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. Israeli police raised the alert to the highest possible non-emergency level following the attack. (AFP, DPA, Reuters)

A leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades wanted for a series of shootings, was killed by Palestinian police as they tried to arrest him in Tubas, near Nablus, security officials said. Abdul Razzak, whose age was reported as 26 or 28, was wanted for a series of shootings in town. His supporters retaliated by setting fire to a police station, sparking armed clashes in which 15 people were wounded, including six policemen. Mr. Razzak's brother was wounded, as was a policeman and three bystanders. (AFP, AP)

Israeli forces arrested PA Minister of State Wasfi Qubaha of Hamas, 43, during an overnight raid on his home in Jenin, his wife and Palestinian sources said. His computer and many of his documents were confiscated. (AFP, AP, DPA, Reuters)

Hamas said that it would not consider a truce and called for more attacks on Israel. It also warned Israel that if it continued its assault, it would threaten the release of Cpl. Gilad Shalit. "If there is an end to the attacks, we can talk about a truce," said Abu Ubeida, a spokesman for the Hamas military wing. (AP)

UN Special Coordinator Michael C. Williams met with PA President Abbas in Gaza City. Mr. Williams said in a statement that he and Abbas looked at "ways of reaching a general truce with Israel in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, as well as ways to make progress on the internal Palestinian front". "I'm very troubled by the level of violence here," he said. "I think the UN, the international community in general, have been very concerned about the level of intra-Palestinian violence, but also by the Israeli attacks which I know have caused civilian deaths, considerable numbers." (AFP, AP)

PA Prime Minister's spokesman Ghazi Hamad, speaking at the Hay literary festival in Wales, said about Alan Johnston, the BBC journalist captured in the Gaza Strip on 12 March, "I know that he is well and healthy, and in a good situation. No one has tried to harm him or hurt him." Mr. Hamad said he knew the group holding Johnston and was personally involved in negotiations for his release. "I think there are continuous efforts to release him. We hope we can do it very, very soon," Mr. Hamad said, adding he could not say exactly when. (AFP)

Leading British architects, including Will Alsop, Terry Farrell, Richard MacCormac, Royal Institute of British Architects President Jack Pringle and President-elect Sunand Prasad, accused their counterparts in Israel of complicity in schemes that contribute to the "social, political and economic oppression of Palestinians", *The Guardian* reported. The architects signed a petition organized by the group Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP). "APJP asserts that the actions of our fellow professionals working with these enterprises are clearly unethical, immoral and contravene universally recognised professional codes of conduct," a spokesman said. "We ask the Israeli Association of United Architects to meet their professional obligations to declare their opposition to this inhuman occupation." Mr Alsop told *Building Design* magazine that they felt compelled to act. "This is not against Israel, it's for Palestine," he said. "I think the Palestinians are living in a prison. I'd like fellow colleagues in Israel to feel some responsibility about this shabby treatment. Architects are a fairly humanitarian lot and perhaps they could help." (The Guardian)

27

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip into the southern Israeli town of Sderot critically wounded a 36-year-old Israeli man with shrapnel, who later died of his wounds. A second Israeli was injured in the attack. The rocket reportedly exploded on a street, spraying shrapnel into a car and causing its driver to crash into a wall. It was the second fatal rocket attack in less than a week. Prime Minister Olmert told the weekly meeting of his Cabinet later in the day that he had instructed the IDF to do whatever it takes to halt the rocket fire. "No one involved in terror has immunity – pure and simple," Mr. Olmert said in broadcast remarks at the Cabinet session. Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas official, said Mr. Olmert's "threats and the continued Zionist escalation makes any talk about calm pointless". (AP, Reuters)

Hoda al-Turk, a spokeswoman for UNRWA, said that more than 5,000 Palestinian refugee families – or about 25,000 refugees – had left the Nahr al-Bared camp in Lebanon, home to some 31,000 people, since the fighting began there one week ago. A majority of the families had fled to the nearby Beddawi refugee camp, while others were staying in Tripoli and surrounding villages, she said. (AP)

"The talks with the Palestinian faction leaders began formally today on Sunday in Cairo with representatives of the Fatah party," Egypt's MENA news agency quoted an "informed source" as saying. "The talks will then continue with the other factions, each separately, in order to assess the views of each faction as to ending the infighting, and the possibility of reaching a comprehensive truce with Israel," the source said. Gen. Borhan Hamad, heading the Egyptian team, was also to meet representatives of Hamas. In a statement faxed to DPA in Damascus, Mohammad Nazal, member of Hamas' Political Bureau, said that the Hamas delegation to Cairo was headed by Moussa Abu Marzouk, deputy head of the Political Bureau. Palestinian sources in Damascus confirmed that the Fatah delegation was led by Rawhi Fattouh. The sources further said that the Egyptian Government had invited the Democratic and Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, as well as the Islamic Jihad. (AFP, DPA)

Jordan's King Abdullah II told a visiting US congressional delegation, "Both the US Senate and Congress have an important role to positively influence Mideast peacemaking through supporting efforts to restart the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and bringing both sides back to the negotiating table." (AP)

28

Israel bombed a Hamas sport club in northern Gaza, wounding four Palestinians, including a woman and a child, and destroying the building, security sources said. (AFP)

At least seven rockets fired from the Gaza Strip struck Sderot in southern Israel but no one was hurt, the IDF said. (Reuters)

In an operation near Nablus, Israeli soldiers detained Jamal Tirawi, 41, the spokesman of Fatah's PLC bloc with close ties to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Israeli troops arrested him in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus along with four of his bodyguards, his brother Said Tirawi said. Overall, the IDF said it arrested 12 people in Nablus overnight. In the morning, angry Fatah gunmen closed roads in Nablus, accusing the PA Government of failing to protect the people. An IDF spokeswoman confirmed that Mr. Tirawi had been taken into custody along with six other wanted militants. "He was responsible for a terrorist attack in a Tel Aviv cafe in 2002 in which one woman was killed and 29 people were wounded," the spokeswoman said. Fatah spokesman Jamal Nazzal condemned the arrests and said in a statement that the international community should "press Israel to abandon colonial mentality contradicting the principles of human rights and democracy". (AP, Reuters, Xinhua)

Israeli soldiers detained a Palestinian militant at a hospital in Jericho, as he was being treated for gunshot wounds to the abdomen, the Jericho Government Hospital said. An IDF spokesman said Israeli troops drove into the city to arrest a "wanted" militant of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, responsible for shooting and roadside bomb attacks against Israeli soldiers and motorists in the area. A gun battle erupted during the arrest between the troops and other Al-Aqsa gunmen, one of whom was injured and taken to the hospital. (DPA)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, Defence Minister Amir Peretz and IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi authorized the IDF to intensify ground operations in the Gaza Strip. Under the new directive, larger numbers of troops will be able to enter Gaza on pinpoint missions, but no widespread campaign was imminent, anonymous military officials said. (AP)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh followed up his weekly cabinet meeting from a secret location through a video conference system, due to Israeli threats to target Hamas leaders. PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti confirmed to reporters that the weekly session discussed ways of promoting the Government's initiative to reach a ceasefire with Israel. (Xinhua)

Ghazi Hamad, a senior spokesman for PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, met several times with kidnapped BBC reporter Alan Johnston in Gaza, a newspaper reported. Mr. Hamad was in London on the invitation by the British Government to discuss the demands made by the Army of Islam, which had claimed responsibility for kidnapping Mr. Johnston on 12 March. (DPA)

On the second day of meetings in Cairo, PA Deputy Prime Minister Azzamal-Ahmed of Fatah held talks with Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, as well as Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman. (AFP)

UN Special Coordinator Michael Williams met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mr. Aboul Gheit reportedly told Mr. Williams that a Palestinian-Israeli understanding had to be reached ahead of any discussions on the deployment of peacekeeping forces. It was fruitless to exclude Hamas from negotiations, since this side had achieved victory in elections and represented part of the Palestinian people, Mr. Aboul Gheit also said. (DPA)

Israel's Pensioners Minister Rafi Eitan said that nearly two weeks of Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli air raids may prompt intervention like the boosted United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) after Israel's war against Hezbollah guerrillas in 2006. "The same thing, sooner or later, will happen in the Gaza Strip, with the senior partner in such a force being Egypt because it has no choice," Mr. Eitan told Israel Radio. "And when the Egyptians are there, when 500 or 600 civilians are killed, no one will say anything," he said. "That is what will eventually happen. We are getting there, gradually." Prime Minister Olmert's spokeswoman, Miri Eisin, said Mr. Eitan's thinking was not that of the Government: "The official policy of the State of Israel is that the Palestinian Authority should take responsibility for themselves in Gaza and in the West Bank, fight terror, and have a stable government that would enable going forward to a two-State solution." (Reuters)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) published its annual report on the situation of workers in the occupied territories. The report said that the plight of Palestinians in the occupied territories had worsened dramatically, with 2.4 million now living in poverty, and the economic crisis had accelerated with the number of households below the poverty line increasing by 26 per cent between March 2006 and March 2007. (DPA, www.ilo.org)

"France is very concerned by the escalation of violence [in the Middle East ... and] calls on leaders of the concerned parties to immediately renounce violence,

respect the ceasefire and restore dialogue,” foreign ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei said. (AFP)

“South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad ... expressed his deep concern about the reports on 25 May of Israeli military forces attacking various Palestinian cities and towns and the arrests of 41 Palestinians, including the Minister of Education, Dr. Al-Shaer, members of the Legislative Council, mayors and ordinary citizens,” said a [statement](#) issued by the Department for Foreign Affairs. Mr. Pahad said the attacks and Israel’s rejection of the Palestinian offer of ceasefire made it difficult for peace to prevail in the region. He also appealed to the Palestinians to stop rocket attacks into Israel, saying, “Such attacks were detrimental to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, strongly supported by South Africa, for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders”. ([www.dfa.gov.za](#), Xinhua)

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Israeli soldiers crossed into the Gaza Strip not far from the commercial crossing of Sufa, east of Rafah, and killed two Hamas members near the border, drawing a vow from the Hamas armed wing to retaliate. Abdelkarim Shaath, 21, and Mohammed Muammar, 22, of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, were shot in a gun battle with Israeli troops. Several militants were detained by the force for questioning, an IDF spokesman said. Palestinian medics at Abu Yusef al-Najjar in the town of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip said that three more civilians were moderately injured during the Israeli incursion, including a 32-year-old woman. Later in the day, more IDF ground forces were sent into northern and southern Gaza Strip. (AFP, Reuters, Xinhua)

PA security forces said they discovered a tunnel near the main security complex in Gaza City. One official said an investigation had been launched to determine who had dug the tunnel. (Reuters)

Speaking at a news conference with the President of the European Parliament, PA President Abbas proposed a new truce with Israel, and said he would meet Israeli Prime Minister Olmert next week. Mr. Olmert’s office said a meeting was planned for next week but no specific date or location had been set. (Reuters)

Egypt is proposing to host talks next week between Hamas and Fatah to shore up a ceasefire ending deadly infighting, Palestinian sources said. A Fatah delegation led by Rawhi Fattouh, an envoy of PA President Abbas, had been taking part in talks since 27 May with Egyptian security officials, who were also due to meet separately with Hamas and other factions. Fatah had given the green light for direct talks aimed at consolidating a truce with Hamas, said Abdul Hakim Awadh, a member of the Fatah delegation. (AFP)

John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, called on the Quartet to fully recognize the PA Government, including Hamas members, as an “indispensable requirement” to peace. “In order to prevent another season of violence and to protect human rights in the region, the Quartet must intervene immediately in a fair and even-handed manner,” he said in a [statement](#). “This means the recognition of both Hamas and non-Hamas members of the Palestinian Government of National Unity.” Mr. Dugard also said that both Israel and the Palestinians had violated international humanitarian law in recent days, citing the “indiscriminate firing of rockets into Sderot” and Israel’s military response, which, he said, “fails to distinguish between civilians and combatants and is a disproportionate use of force”. (AP, [www.unog.ch](#))

In a telephone conversation with his Israeli counterpart, Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the rising tension in the Middle East would not serve the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis. He told Israel’s Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni that the rising tension in the Occupied Palestinian Territory threatened security and stability in the entire region. He emphasized the necessity for resumption of negotiations between the Palestinian and Israelis. ([www.mid.ru](#))

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Two Palestinians were killed and two others wounded when Israeli warplanes fired missiles at a crowd in the Abed Rabbu area, east of the Gaza Strip town of Jabalya, medical sources said. The two fatalities were identified as Mahmoud Hammouda, 23, and Omar Sha’ban, 25. (Wafa)

A Qassam rocket hit a building in Sderot, causing damage. (Ha’aretz)

At least 12 Palestinians, including the Mayor of the town of Qabalan, were arrested by the IDF in Nablus, Qalqiliya and Jenin, security and local sources said. (Wafa)

IDF soldiers seized control of a number of houses in Nablus, security sources said. (Wafa)

The Quartet met at Principals’ level in Berlin and issued a [statement](#). (UN press release SG/2128-PAL/2078)

Rafiq Hussein, Chief of Staff of PA President Abbas’ Office, issued a letter on behalf of the President to EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, Marc Otte; US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, C. David Welch; Michael Williams, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; Sergei Yakovlev, Russian Federation Middle East Envoy; and representatives of the Quartet. The letter stated that Israel had resumed extrajudicial assassinations as well as aerial and artillery bombardment of cities and civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, violating international humanitarian law.

Mr. Abbas had repeatedly condemned rocket attacks against Israelis and was working tirelessly to bring these violations to an end, the letter said. The letter also referred to closures, and movement and access restrictions that had crippled the economic situation. Since unilateral disengagement, Israel’s policy had been to keep the Gaza Strip in isolation which, when coupled with the financial siege, had dire consequences on the Strip. The letter said that Mr. Abbas was appealing to the Israeli Government to work with him urgently to develop a comprehensive, mutual and simultaneous ceasefire, in line with the benchmarks set out by the US Government. Israel had not been forthcoming in accepting this offer, opting instead to go ahead with attacks and incursions. President Abbas urged the international community to use all means to help put an end to Israeli bombardment, assassinations and abductions and use their good offices to help bring about a mutual ceasefire. (Wafa)

The Security Council issued the following press statement:

The members of the Security Council expressed their grave concern at the breakdown of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the resulting increase in violence.

The members welcomed the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to establish a ceasefire, and expressed appreciation for the active support of the Government of Egypt in this regard. They urged all parties to join the members of the Council in supporting the call of President Abbas for an immediate end to the violence.

(UN press release SC/9028-PAL/2077)

President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering [told](#) the Knesset: “I condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued firing of Qassam rockets...

The European Parliament calls for the release, on the one hand, of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers... and the British journalist Alan Johnston, and, on the other, the imprisoned Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and other politicians, including the Minister of Education, Nasser al-Din Shaer... I urge Israel to avoid reacting disproportionately that affects innocent victims among the civilian population... It would be desirable if the Middle East Quartet, which is meeting this evening in Berlin, could also meet here in this region... To my mind there is no better way of negotiating on peace and security, on future developments and on the peaceful co-existence of Israel and a Palestinian State, within secure borders, without violence and on the basis of good-neighbourly relations, than at a joint conference... I was deeply shocked by the economic, social and humanitarian conditions which I saw [in the Gaza Strip], which are unacceptable... I ask the Government of Israel: please release the Palestinian funds of about 700 million dollars, which are based on customs revenue, to President Abbas so that he can use them to pay the teachers and police.” ([www.europarl.europa.eu](#))

Meretz Knesset member Avshalom Vilan and Zahava Gal-On had been promoting an initiative that would give the Arab League the responsibility to restore stability in the Gaza Strip and the deployment of a multi-national force, in cooperation with the European Union. The initiative had been already presented to senior Palestinian figures and foreign diplomats. The two Knesset members were seeking the support of senior ministers and Government officials, and were planning to present their proposal to Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni next week. The call to the Arab League to take responsibility for the Gaza Strip was part of “a package deal,” which would begin with negotiations between Arab and Israeli representatives on the Arab Peace Initiative. The next stage would include the exchange of

kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for Palestinian prisoners, including Hamas ministers and parliamentarians. Then, a mutual ceasefire would be declared and the Quartet would propose a multi-national force deployment at the UN Security Council. The multi-national force would be deployed for two to five years, with the agreement of both Israel and the Palestinians. (www.haaretz.com)

The PA Government and Hamas rejected the stationing of Arab or international military forces in the Gaza Strip, or bringing the Gaza Strip under the supervision of the Arab League. In a press conference in Ramallah, PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti stated: "The suggestion of Meretz to have the Strip under the control of the Arab League is inflammatory to the unity of the Occupied Territories, and to the right of the Palestinians to determine their destiny and to the principle of the state building." The spokesman of the Hamas bloc in the PLC, Salah Bardawil, told *Ma'an* that "any plan in this regard will be rejected, and we will not deal with it in any way." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Meir Sheerit, Knesset Member (Kadima) and Minister without Portfolio; and Rafi Eitan, Minister of Pensioners Affairs, had proposed that Israel produce its own version of the Qassam rocket to be fired at targets inside the Gaza Strip in response to Palestinian rocket fire on its southern communities. The suggestion was made at a meeting of the Security Cabinet to discuss the ongoing military operation aimed at countering Qassam fire from Gaza. They said that this kind of rocket, which would cost very little, would cause a small amount of damage but would put pressure on the population in Gaza. (*Ha'aretz*)

A report released by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel accused the Shin Bet and police of cases of severe torture of Palestinian security suspects. The report contained the testimonies of nine Palestinians who were arrested by the IDF and Shin Bet between 2004 and 2005, including one that charged police investigators with committing sexual abuse. (*Ha'aretz*)

Britain's University and College Union, representing some 120,000 academics, voted to allow local branches to make a final decision on imposing a boycott on cooperation with Israeli academics. The motion asked British university and college staff to note that "Israel's 40-year occupation has seriously damaged the fabric of Palestinian society through annexation, illegal settlement, collective punishment and restriction of movement" and called on them to condemn the "complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation." (*AP*)

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Hamas' military wing said it had not launched a rocket in 48 hours. Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility for launching two Qassam rockets into Israel, which caused no damage. (*AP*)

Two militants from the Popular Resistance Committees were wounded in the northern Gaza Strip as they prepared to launch a rocket at Israel, PA security sources and witnesses said. In a separate incident, Islamic Jihad said two members had been slightly injured in an Israeli artillery strike, but the IDF denied involvement. "We will actively pursue and hit these rocket launchers as well as those who operate them," said David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Olmert's office. (*AFP, AP*)

PA President Abbas' aide, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that the next meeting between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, scheduled for 7 June, "is expected in the Palestinian territories." "The President is working night and day for a mutual, comprehensive ceasefire," he added. (*AP*)

Egypt's Foreign Ministry said the Quartet's statement "raised questions about the credibility of the Quartet as a neutral party" and would encourage Israel to continue attacks and the arrest of Palestinian ministers. "[The Ministry] is surprised at the Quartet's lack of condemnation of Israel's kidnapping of the Palestinian Parliament," it said in a statement. (*Reuters*)

"I think it has been long enough since Palestinians have wanted and needed their State, and long enough that Israelis have wanted and needed a neighbour that could be a source of security and not a source of threat for them," US Secretary of State Rice told a conference entitled "Women Leaders - Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East" held in Vienna. (*AP*)

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert would travel to Washington in three weeks' time to meet President Bush, a Government official told *AFP*. "They will discuss the issues of Iran and the Palestinians," he said, adding that no exact date had been set. (*AFP*)

Norway resumed direct aid to the PA with a \$10 million transfer. (*AP*)

"We are not against releasing the [PA] funds. We are prepared to transfer them," an official in Prime Minister Olmert's office told *Reuters*. "But we need a mechanism to make sure the money does not go to the terrorist organizations and the Government in which Hamas participates." (*Reuters, Ha'aretz*)

The Dutch Government said that it would provide \$8.4 million in 2007, to help train the PA police force, to be distributed through the Temporary International Mechanism. "The Palestinian police force's priority task is to maintain public order," the Dutch Foreign Ministry said. "The internal stability of the Palestinian territories is also of importance for Israel." (*AFP*)
