

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW

December 2010

Monthly highlights

- Israel announces new building plans in East Jerusalem ([1 December](#))
- Brazil recognizes the State of Palestine based on 1967 borders ([3 December](#))
- Argentina and Uruguay recognize an independent Palestinian State ([6 December](#))
- US drops demand for renewal of expired freeze on construction of Jewish settlements ([7 December](#))
- B'Tselem report accuses Israeli police of arresting Palestinian minors as young as five in East Jerusalem ([13 December](#))
- Palestinian Supreme Court annuls decision by PA Cabinet to postpone municipal elections and calls on the Government to set a new date as soon as possible ([13 December](#))
- Special Coordinator Robert H. Serry briefs Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question ([14 December](#))
- Norway upgrades status of Palestinian representation to “diplomatic mission” effective early next year ([15 December](#))
- Ecuador recognizes Palestine as an independent State ([24 December](#))

I

Israeli forces shot and injured a Palestinian worker who was collecting stone aggregate in northern Gaza, medical officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas would accept the outcome of a Palestinian referendum on a future peace treaty with Israel, its Gaza leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said. Addressing a rare news conference in Gaza, he said, “We accept a Palestinian State on the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, the release of Palestinian prisoners, and the resolution of the issue of refugees.” He added that “Hamas will respect the results (of a referendum) regardless of whether it differs with its ideology and principles,” provided it included all Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora. (*Reuters*)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) removed a report about the Western Wall [as not a surviving remnant of the Jewish Temple, but an integral part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque] from an official website. Palestinian officials would not comment on the report, but its author, Al-Mutawakil Taha, a civil servant in the Information Ministry, said that he stood by it. (*AP*)

The Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee announced its plan to build 625 new housing units in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. The plan was approved by the Committee over two years ago but had been put on hold due to several faults in it. (*Haaretz, IMEMC, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that the country should not implement another freeze on settlement building in the West Bank. *(The Financial Times)*

Several Spanish and Latin American actors, writers and singers, with the assistance of the Spanish Committee, a supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have begun a humanitarian campaign called Aid Chain, to raise funds to help refugee children in Gaza. *(IMEMC)*

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Two Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces as they reportedly tried to infiltrate an Israeli kibbutz east of the Gaza Strip. Al-Quds Brigades said that the two were members of the group. *(Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post)*

Palestinian sources said that Israeli soldiers had fired dozens of rounds of live ammunition and a number of shells at homes in Khan Yunis causing extensive damage. *(IMEMC)*

Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Saeb Erakat said that the Palestinian leadership has not yet received any official US response over the discussions with Israel to halt the settlement construction, denying reports that the US failed to convince Israel to freeze settlement building in the West Bank. *(Xinhua)*

Head of PLO Negotiations Department Erakat said, following Israel's announcement of new building plans in East Jerusalem, that "it's time for the American Administration to tell the world that Israel holds the responsibility for the collapse of this peace process. Israel has chosen settlements and not peace". *(Reuters)*

Israeli forces entered three homes in East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, detaining two men and a minor for unspecified reasons. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israeli forces closed most gates leading into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, leaving only two open. All worshipers under 40 years old were barred by Israeli police from entering the compound. The action came followed the entry of an estimated 55 religious Jews into the mosque compound, accompanied by Israeli guards. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Palestinian officials warned of "a severe humanitarian crisis" due to a shortage of wheat and fodder in the Gaza Strip following an Israeli decision to minimize the working time to two days per week at the Karni crossing point and decreasing the amount of wheat allowed in, leaving mills empty.

Abdul Nasser Al-Ajramy, head of Gaza's bakeries' association, said that to avoid a crisis, the crossings must be opened for three days per week.

(Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

A crossing terminal between Israel and the Gaza Strip was opened for the transport of 200-210 truckloads of aid and commercial products. Among the expected imports were 20 new cars, 3 truckloads of construction material for UNRWA projects and four truckloads for the Energy Authority. In addition, 2 truckloads of strawberries were scheduled for export from Gaza under a Dutch Government programme to support Gaza farmers. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israeli settlers set fire to Palestinian-owned olive groves in Khahlet Awana, adjacent to the evacuated settlement of "Homesh" near Nablus, said Ghassan Daghlis, PA official responsible for monitoring settlement activity in the northern West Bank. He said that Palestinians were banned from entering the area because of the presence of an Israeli military installation. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Britain published an amendment to a law that put visiting Israeli officials at risk of arrest for alleged war crimes, sparking outrage from human rights groups. The change would ensure that private arrest warrants for offences under certain international laws, including the Geneva Convention, would first have to be approved by the chief prosecutor. *(AFP)*

Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said that despite recent improvements in the situation in the Gaza Strip, things were "not improving" for the 4.5 million people who live in the Palestinian territory. This was due to the "continued blockade of Gaza, the occupation itself and the settlements". He noted that the easing of the Israeli blockade in June had led to a slight improvement of the situation in Gaza. However, three quarters of the residents were still dependent on relief agencies, and unemployment remained at "disastrous levels". *(AFP)*

The IDF shot and moderately wounded a Palestinian collecting gravel at the border with Gaza. (*Xinhua*)

In Bahrain, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "The United States is working intensively to create the conditions that will permit the parties to negotiate their way forward to a final resolution." Ms. Clinton urged Arab States to step up their own support of the peace process and their financial support for the PA, saying, "They are building the institutions necessary for a viable, independent State that can provide security, law and order, and essential services to the Palestinian people." (*Reuters*)

It was reported that Brazil had recognized the State of Palestine based on 1967 borders, in response to a request made by PA President Abbas to President Lula da Silva. President da Silva sent a letter to Mr. Abbas on 1 December, saying that Brazil recognized Palestine and hoped that the recognition would help lead to States of Israel and Palestine "that will co-exist peacefully and in security". (*Haaretz*)

Clashes broke out in the Al-Issawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem when the IDF fired tear gas canisters and rubber-coated bullets at a march of peace activists and residents protesting the continued closure of roads leading to the residential zone. Clashes were reported the previous day when eight Palestinians were treated for tear gas inhalation, said the head of the Union of Arab Medics. According to Israeli police spokesperson Luba As-Semmari, clashes had erupted when two Molotov cocktails were thrown towards a police checkpoint at the entrance to the neighbourhood. She said that no injuries had been reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ghassan Khatib, a PA spokesman, said that the timing of the Israeli plan to build 625 homes in Pisgat Ze'ev, in East Jerusalem, was very harmful to the resumption of the peace talks. He said, "This is a message [showing] that Israel wants neither the freeze nor the talks." Hagit Ofan, a director of Peace Now, said: "The timing is political. [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu was trying to buy time and not give the Americans an answer on another freeze in order to start as many new projects as possible in East Jerusalem" According to Ms. Ofan, construction may only begin in two or three years because the plan still needs to receive final approvals and undergo a tender process. (*The Financial Times*)

4

PA President Abbas threatened to dissolve the PA should Israel fail to stop all of its settlement activities. During a TV interview with *Palestine TV*, Mr. Abbas said that he could not agree to remain as President of an Authority that did not really exist due to Israel's ongoing occupation. (*IMEMC*)

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said, in a meeting with his Jordanian counterpart Nasser Jawdeh, in Amman, that his country would make every effort to promote Middle East peace. (*AFP*)

Jordan's King Abdullah stressed the importance of salvaging peace negotiations to ensure regional security, during his keynote address at the regional security summit, the 7th Manama Dialogue, organized by the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Our region will not enjoy security and stability unless we solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Arabs, Muslims and Israelis find peace," he said. "We are committed.

The Arab Peace Initiative offers more than just an end of conflict. It offers a lasting peace that will allow Israel to have normal relations with 57 Arab and Muslim countries, and will free our region from the threat of war and conflict". (*The Jordan Times*)

5

Palestinian police detained 13 young people who had been protesting the closure by Hamas authorities of the Sharek Youth Forum, a non-governmental organization in Gaza. A police spokesman said that the youths had been taken into custody for holding a demonstration without a permit from the Ministry of Interior. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Following a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah, PA President Abbas said that a US proposal for renewed peace talks was expected within days. (*AFP*)

During a meeting with Spanish media covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel's President, Shimon Peres, stated that peace negotiations were "still half way" and added that "any deal would be better than not to reach any agreement". Mr. Peres also declared that a peace agreement must

include clear lines on the Israeli settlements and the Palestinian borders as, in his opinion, these were the main subjects in order to achieve peace.

(IMEMC)

Hamas official Salah Al-Bardawil said that it was up to Fatah to initiate the next meeting in Damascus to discuss national unity. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

PA President Abbas met with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara. Following the meeting, the Ambassador of Palestine to Turkey, Nabil Ma'roof, said that Mr. Erdoğan had pledged to support a bid for the establishment of a Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders and would speak with the leaders of all those nations with which Turkey had diplomatic relations. Mr. Erdoğan stressed to President Abbas that he believed a final reconciliation agreement had to be reached between Fatah and Hamas and that he would continue to support economic development plans created as part of the Ramallah Government's "two years to statehood" initiative, by contributing \$10 million for the construction of an industrial zone in the West Bank district of Jenin. The leaders also agreed on a programme to foster trade between the two nations, which would include a preferential visa programme for businessmen from Palestine. *(Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, Hürriyet Daily News)*

Turkey still expected an apology and compensation for nine Turkish activists killed on the Gaza-bound ship last May, despite its offer of help to Israel in battling forest fires, said Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan. *(Reuters, Ynet News)*

Following a ban prohibiting Palestinians from working in West Bank settlements, issued by the PA as part of a campaign that included a national boycott of settlement produce, Palestinian trade union official Shahir Sa'd said that Palestinians employed in settlements would not give up their jobs until the PA provided alternative work. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

During a visit to Israel, Dutch MP Gert Wilders said, at a conference organized by a far-right Israeli party, that Israel must keep on building settlements in the West Bank to defend itself against the forces of Islam out to destroy the Jewish State. Mr. Wilders said that settlement building was a "strategic" necessity essential to Israel's survival. *(AFP)*

In a report prepared and published by the National Bureau for Protecting the Land and Countering Settlements, it was revealed that the Israeli Government had approved the construction of 846 units in Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. The Bureau said that, during the previous week, the Israeli Government had approved the construction of 130 new units in the Gilo settlement, south of Jerusalem, and had also started the expansion of a number of settlements north of the city. Furthermore, the Bureau reported that Israel had demolished three Palestinian homes in Jerusalem and had forced a resident to demolish his own home. *(IMEMC)*

The PA had despatched fire trucks to Israel to help fight the fires raging in the Carmel mountains, outside Haifa. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, in the meantime, declared that the fires were "plagues from God". PA President Abbas received a phone call from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, thanking him for sending Palestinian firefighters to help in controlling the fires. *(The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, IMEMC)*

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charged that both Israel and Hamas were impeding its medical aid work in the Palestinian territories. *(AFP)*

6

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip exploded south of Ashkelon, in Israel, a military spokesperson said. No injuries or damage were reported.

The armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that it had carried out the attack. *(AFP, Ynetnews)*

PA Minister of Prisoners Affairs Issa Qaraqe said that Israeli forces detained 423 Palestinians, 80 of them children, in the month of November. Mr. Qaraqe said that most of the arrests had taken place when Palestinians attempted to fight off Israeli settlers who had encroached on West Bank land. He also said that there were approximately 7,000 Palestinian detainees in 22 prisons and Israeli detention centres, and that 95 per cent of the detainees were subjected to harassment and attacks during interrogation. He highlighted that in a "new escalation", Israel had placed some 65 children under house arrest in East Jerusalem. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Six Palestinians were detained in a series of Israeli military raids in the area of Ramallah. *(IMEMC)*

Argentina and Uruguay said that they were joining Brazil in recognizing an independent Palestinian State. Reading a letter sent by Argentine President Christina Fernández de Kirchner to PA President Abbas, the Argentine Foreign Minister Hector Timerman said: "The Argentine

Government recognizes Palestine as a free and independent State, within the borders defined in 1967". (AFP)

At a news conference in Ljubljana with his Slovenian counterpart Samuel Žbogar, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that Israel saw no reason to reimpose a freeze on settlement construction in the West Bank. He said, "I do not see any reason to extend this moratorium. After 10 months of moratorium, we are still in a deadlock. We do not see any benefit". (AFP, www.mzz.gov.si)

Egypt's Foreign Minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said, during a visit to Bucharest: "Arab countries and members of the Follow-up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative [of the Arab League] feel that they have not to close the door and to allow the American effort a further opportunity or possibility", adding: "But the moment of truth will be reached soon and the Arab peace committee will have to convene in order to look into the situation and then they will decide which of the available options to pursue". He did not give a date for the meeting. (AFP)

The EU said it had transferred €20.7 million to help the PA pay the November salaries and pensions of 84,948 public servants and pensioners. The contribution came from the €41.4 million financing package announced by the EU at the end of October to support salaries and pensions paid by the PA. The financing package complemented a €158.5 million package signed earlier in the year, which had enabled the PA to sustain its operations during 2010, including payment of salaries, pensions and its social protection programme. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Kerem Shalom and Karni crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip were opened for imports. Palestinian liaison official, Raed Fattouh, said that 150-160 truckloads of goods and 20 new cars would be allowed through the Kerem Shalom crossing, in addition to three truckloads of construction materials for UN-run projects, limited quantities of domestic-use gas and industrial-grade diesel. Two truckloads of strawberries and flowers harvested in Gaza would be exported under the auspices of a [Dutch Government programme](#). The Karni crossing would be opened to allow 140 truckloads of wheat and animal feed into Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

Speaking at a workshop in Algeria, Abdul-Nasser Farwana, a researcher and former detainee, said that Israel had performed more than 5,000 medical experiments on Palestinians held in Israeli detention centres, and the number was increasing. (Ma'an News Agency)

7

Several Israeli military vehicles reportedly entered the Gaza Strip, east of the Bureij refugee camp, firing into the area. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF said that they had arrested seven Palestinians in the West Bank overnight. (www.idf.il)

Two projectiles, fired from the Gaza Strip, landed in an open area in southern Israeli without causing injuries or damage, a military spokesperson said. (AFP)

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will visit Washington next week to consult the Obama administration on the way forward in stalled Middle East peace talks, a US official said. (Reuters)

After three weeks of discussions with the Israeli Government, the Obama administration had given up on its effort to persuade Prime Minister Netanyahu to renew an expired freeze on the construction of Jewish settlements for 90 days, two senior officials said. (The New York Times)

US State Department Spokesman Philip J. Crowley [said](#): "Our efforts are not suspended. We are having conversations, even as we speak today, with both Israeli officials, with Palestinian officials ... We remain determined to work with the parties on a path forward and try to determine how best to advance the process back to direct negotiations and to, ultimately, a framework agreement." Asked about Argentina and Brazil recognizing a Palestinian State, Mr. Crowley said: "We don't think that we should be distracted from the fact that the only way to resolve the core issues within the process is through direct negotiations. That remains our focus. And we do not favour that course of action. As we've said many, many times, any unilateral action, we believe, is counterproductive." (www.state.gov)

Israel criticized Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay for declaring the recognition of a Palestinian State, calling it "highly damaging interference". "They never made any contribution to [the peace process] ... and now they're making a decision that is completely contrary to everything that has been

agreed so far,” said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Yigal Palmor. *(Reuters)*

In a statement at the end of its annual summit, the Gulf Cooperation Council expressed support for the PA’s refusal to negotiate with Israel in the absence of a settlement freeze. The Council also emphasized that any settlement freeze should include East Jerusalem, and underlined both support for “the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State” and “opposition to a partial settlement or in stages” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *(AFP)*

In the [2011 Consolidated Appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory](#), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) presented a strategy budgeted at about \$576 million, supporting 213 projects. *(www.ochaopt.org)*

Israel's policies in East Jerusalem were harming the prospect of the Palestinians having their future capital there, which "seriously endangers" a two-State solution, the EU said. "If current trends are not stopped as a matter of urgency, the prospect of East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian State becomes increasingly unlikely and unworkable," warns an annual EU report seen by AFP. *(AFP)*

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that contacts with the US over a renewed moratorium on settlements in the West Bank had been frozen in the wake of the *WikiLeaks* crisis and the tensions between North and South Korea. Mr. Barak said that Prime Minister Netanyahu and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had reached an agreement in their discussions over trading a freeze for certain American guarantees, adding that a deal had not yet been “closed” and that the approval of Congress was still needed. *(Haaretz)*

Rapid population growth in the Near East was not being matched by growth in agricultural production, making the region ever more dependent on food imports and increasingly vulnerable to market and supply shocks. This trend makes it vital to boost investment in agriculture in the region, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf [said](#). Conflict zones, notably the West Bank and Gaza, were sources of "serious concern", he added. *(www.fao.org)*

8

Israeli warplanes carried out two air strikes on the southern Gaza Strip early this morning. The first injured a young Palestinian man and damaged a farm in Khan Yunis. The second targeted a tunnel in Rafah. There were no reports of injuries in the second attack. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Shelling from an Israeli tank left three Palestinians wounded in the eastern part of Gaza City. *(IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)*

An Israeli man was moderately injured after a mortar shell fired by militants in Gaza exploded in the western Negev in Israel. An army spokesperson said, “There were four or five mortars that landed near Kerem Shalom.” *(Haaretz)*

Israeli forces detained a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine during a raid east of Nablus. *(Haaretz)*

PA President Abbas said that peace talks with Israel were in crisis after Washington's decision to drop its demand for a new freeze on Jewish settlement building in the West Bank. "There is no doubt that there is a crisis," Mr. Abbas said in Athens, after a meeting with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou. *(AFP)*

The Palestinians said that "Israeli obstinacy" had made Washington give up on efforts to freeze Jewish settlement and questioned whether the United States could ever help them attain independence. Senior Palestinian official Yasser Abed Rabbo said that, with its bid to revive direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations now at a dead end, the United States was proposing a return to indirect talks to try to unstick a peace process in deep crisis. *(Reuters)*

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said that the League would discuss alternatives to negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis at a meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers later this week or early next week. “I have been informed formally by the Palestinian leadership that they have received an answer ... from the US Administration that they can do no more to bring about a (settlement) moratorium... You cannot negotiate with the goal of establishing a Palestinian State while the territory of that supposed State is being eroded on a daily basis,” Mr. Moussa said. He also indicated that one of the possible alternatives the Ministers would discuss was to bring the issue to the UN, while declining to elaborate. *(Kyodo)*

In a joint statement after talks with PA President Abbas in Athens, Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou said, “Greece is ready to contribute

to efforts for the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State,” and stressed that it was of vital interest for Greece since it would become a guarantee for security across the whole region. *(Xinhua)*

US State Department Spokesman P. J. Crowley said that US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell would visit the region next week for separate talks with the Israeli and Palestinian sides. *(DPA)*

The Israeli Prime Minister's Office [said](http://www.pmo.gov.il), “The Security Cabinet ... approved additional measures to expedite increased exports from the Gaza Strip, thus assisting its economy and easing the burden of the Gazan population under the repressive Hamas terrorist regime.” *(www.pmo.gov.il)*

After talks in Sofia with his Bulgarian counterpart Nikolay Mladenov, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit urged the international community to call an "end game" in Middle East peace talks and set clear deadlines for reaching Israeli-Palestinian agreement. *(AFP)*

Mark Hambley, the former US Ambassador to Qatar and Lebanon, met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza, after calling on the US to end its policy of refusing to speak with Hamas. Mr. Hambley told a group of journalists before his meeting with Mr. Haniyeh: "We should have been talking to Hamas for the past three years. The difficulty is that we've put Hamas in the same category as groups that we have grievances against." *(Ma'an News Agency)*

“The EU regrets Israel's refusal to freeze the construction of settlements in the West Bank which are illegal and an obstacle to peace”, EU Spokesperson Maja Kocijancic said. "We note with regret that the Israelis have not been in a position to accept an extension of the moratorium as requested by the EU, the US and the Quartet," she added. *(AFP)*

Israel had demanded that Turkey admit that the IDF raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla had no malicious intent, a condition which is part of the recent endeavour between Israel and Turkey to reach an agreement to put an end to the crisis in their relations. *(Haaretz)*

Israeli forces demolished a number of Palestinian buildings near Nablus, including a PA school, officials said. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The Israeli military levelled a school in the village of Tana, near Hebron, and forced dozens of families living in tents to evacuate their homes. A Red Cross building, which reportedly served the impoverished residents of the village, was also severely damaged, witnesses said. *(IMEMC, Press TV)*

The Israeli Supreme Court ordered Palestinian lawmaker Muhammad Abu Tir removed from Jerusalem and transferred to the outer West Bank today. Mr. Abu Tir, a Hamas member elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, was arrested in June soon after being released from another Israeli prison after a three-year term. He was charged with residing illegally in Jerusalem. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

In a statement, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, said: “I am concerned that Israel has not heeded the Quartet's call to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem... On a more positive note, I was pleased to be informed by the Israeli Government today of its decision to allow exports from Gaza... I can also confirm that United Nations agencies have now received approval to complete construction projects in Gaza totalling \$110 million... On another subject, the potential precedent set by today's Israeli court decision which led to the transfer of a Jerusalem Palestinian Legislative Council member to Ramallah is worrying. This case and that of three other lawmakers currently facing court proceedings continue to raise serious human rights concerns regarding Palestinian residency rights in East Jerusalem. I will be raising the UN's concerns directly with the Israeli Government and international partners. It is essential that all parties refrain from provocative actions, particularly at this time.” *(www.unsco.org)*

Twelve activists from Indonesia were slated to leave Jakarta today as part of the first "Asia to Gaza Solidarity Caravan", which would travel across Iran, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt to reach Gaza. *(Xinhua)*

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

The Secretary-General takes note with regret that Israel will not heed the united call of the international community, as reflected by the Quartet, to extend the settlement restraint policy. He reiterates his urging Israel to fulfil its Road Map obligation to freeze all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

In spite of this setback, the Secretary-General believes it is more important than ever to promote a negotiated end-game for a two-State solution. He is encouraged that the United States has indicated its determination to continue its efforts in this direction and he urges the full cooperation of the parties towards that end. He is looking forward to these matters being discussed in the days to come among all members of the Quartet. *(UN press release SG/SM/13305)*

9

Palestinian security officials said that the Israeli Air Force had bombed four sites in the Gaza Strip, causing no casualties. The Israeli military said, "The IAF struck a weapon manufacturing and storage unit in the central Gaza Strip and two terror hubs in the northern Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire over the past few days." *(AFP, www.idf.il)*

Israeli forces detained three Palestinian students overnight north of Hebron. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

IDF Chief of General Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, said, "The situation on the Gaza Strip border is fragile these days," citing a large number of explosive devices on the border and rising activity against Israel at the northern edge of Gaza, according to *Ma'ariv*. "We may need to be prepared for wider action. The next round will be big and it needs to end in a way that leaves no doubt who won. We are significantly stronger than the other side," he said. *(Reuters)*

The Israeli army said that it had used potentially lethal tear-gas grenades of a type banned by its rules. Their use in the West Bank had been brought to light originally by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem. The army said that it was aware of the situation, adding that regulations had now been clarified to ensure that there would be no further illicit use of the ammunition. *(Reuters)*

PA President Abbas told reporters in Cairo, after talks with Egyptian President Mubarak: "We will not accept negotiations as long as settlements continue... We have made this clear to the Americans: without a halt to settlements, no negotiations." Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, was heading to the US to hold talks with top US officials over the crisis in peace talks. Separately, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad was also heading for Washington where he is expected to meet with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, ahead of a forum at the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy, at which Ms. Clinton is to speak about a new strategy for advancing the peace process. Mr. Fayyad, who is to arrive tomorrow, is also expected to address the forum, alongside Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who left for Washington overnight. *(AFP)*

Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and a former negotiator, said in an interview: "Once again, faced with Israeli arrogance and intransigence, the United States backed down... Israel wants the occupation to continue and the Americans helped them buy time..." More peace talks would be "an exercise in futility" unless the US curbed Israeli violations, she added. *(Reuters)*

Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahhar told a news conference that all Palestinian factions, including Fatah, should unite in an armed struggle to liberate all of historic Palestine, as he set fire to an Israeli flag. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

A [survey](#) published by the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy indicated that 58 per cent of Israeli Arabs were against the annexation of Arab cities to a future Palestinian State in the framework of territorial exchanges. The poll further showed that 62 per cent of Israeli Jews believed that the Government should do more to achieve peace with the Palestinians. Some 43 per cent believed peace would be achieved within five years, while 47 per cent speculated it would never be signed. Forty per cent were in favour of peace based on the 1967 borders, while 27 per cent were against an Israeli withdrawal and a Palestinian State. Sixty-three per cent of Israeli Arabs did not believe peace was attainable. Half of

them would not be willing to recognize Israel as a Jewish State under any circumstances. (*Ynetnews*)

British Foreign Secretary William Hague [said](#), "I am disappointed that Israel has not renewed the freeze on settlement construction and that peace talks are currently on hold. It is Britain's longstanding view that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace... There is an urgent need for progress to secure a two-State solution, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States and with a fair settlement for refugees." (*Haaretz, www.fco.gov.uk*)

The Vatican said that it had begun negotiating with the Palestinian leadership for an agreement on the Catholic Church's status in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The status agreement was aimed at "strengthening the special relations between the Holy See and the PLO," the Vatican statement said. (*AFP*)

The spokesperson for EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, issued [statement](#) saying, "Enabling large-scale Palestinian exports in a sustainable way is essential to promote economic development in the Gaza Strip. Yesterday's announcement by the Government of Israel is a positive further step in the right direction... Further efforts and complementary measures are needed to revitalise the Gaza economy, create jobs and strengthen the private sector. We support the Palestinian Authority in their desire to return to the crossings." (*DPA, www.consilium.europa.eu*)

The head of the PA Energy Authority, Omar Kitaneh, signed an agreement with the Spanish Government for a €17.3 million donation to an electricity company in the northern West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities delivered demolition orders for electric transformers and power lines south of Hebron, which provided electricity to 800 Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak that it was vital to break the current diplomatic stalemate and resume negotiations. He expressed concern at the settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and raised the issue of UN freedom of movement between Jerusalem and the West Bank. He took positive note of the Israeli decision to allow exports from Gaza, and urged the Defense Minister to facilitate additional UN reconstruction work in Gaza. He expressed continuing concern at the detention of Gilad Shalit, and the need for further steps on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). (*UN News Centre*)

A ship organized by the Asian People's Solidarity for Palestine, carrying 55 activists and humanitarian aid and headed for Gaza, arrived in Iran. (*IMEMC*)

10

An explosion killed two Palestinian teenagers east of Gaza City as they were playing with a leftover IDF explosive device, Palestinian medical officials said. (*Haaretz*)

Three Gazans, one of them a teenager, were wounded by Israeli gunfire in two incidents near the border, Palestinian medical and security sources said. Two of them sustained gunshot wounds while collecting building material near Beit Lahia. (*AFP*)

Israeli soldiers seized five Palestinians from their homes during a raid in the West Bank town of Dura, PA police said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was scheduled to meet in Washington, with Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, in an effort to break the deadlock in peace talks, US officials said. These talks follow sessions with head of Israel's negotiating team, Yitzhak Molcho, who had also met with US Special Envoy George Mitchell. (*AFP*)

The PA planned to stop coordinating security with Israel, senior Palestinian official Khana Amira told *al-Quds al-Arabi*. He told the newspaper the Palestinians were also considering cancelling other commitments to Israel; the Oslo Accords and the Road Map were also under consideration. (*The Jerusalem Post, UPI*)

Israel's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, said "it's an urgent necessity" for his country and the Palestinians to find a way to resume negotiations on core issues leading to a peace deal. He said that he had asked UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at a meeting to use UN influence to help in

relaunching talks. (AP)

US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and former US President B Clinton, participated in the Seventh Annual Saban [Forum](#), which opened in Washington. Entitled, "US-Israeli Relations: Facing Hard Choices", the Forum focused on the critical decisions by American and Israeli leaders needed to move the Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward. (www.brookings.edu)

In her [statement](#) at the Saban Forum, US Secretary of State Clinton said: "It is no secret that the parties have a long way to go and that they have not yet made the difficult decisions that peace requires... I regret that we have not gotten farther faster in our recent efforts... Palestinians must appreciate Israel's legitimate security concerns. And Israelis must accept the legitimate territorial aspirations of the Palestinian people. Ignoring the other side's needs is, in the end, self-defeating." (www.state.gov)

In his [statement](#) at the Saban Forum, Israeli Defense Minister Barak said: "Without peace and the peace process, both Israelis and Palestinians will ultimately continue to perpetuate the cycle of violence and bloodshed between them... By pursuing peace with security – we are not doing the Palestinians a favour. We are simply working toward assuring the future, identity and success of the Zionist Project." (www.brookings.edu)

"We are approaching a new crisis that began to appear with dropping temperatures and the increasingly cold weather," the Gaza Power Authority said, blaming the PA for the reduction in fuel supplies. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli Government had made an offer to pay thousands of dollars to the families of the nine Turkish citizens killed during the Israeli attack on the Mavi Marmari solidarity ship but refused to offer apologies or accept responsibility for the deadly attack, officials said. (Haaretz, IMEMC)
11

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit southern Israel without causing casualties or damage. (AFP)

The Israeli military said that troops killed two Palestinians trying to cross into Israel from Gaza. (AP)

12

Palestinian officials expressed doubt and frustration about the future of peace talks after the US failed to secure a new settlement freeze. "The United States has once again proposed indirect talks with Israel, which means they don't have anything to present," Palestinian negotiator Mohammad Shtayyeh told AFP. "It is unreasonable for the United States to not have a position and leave the parties to negotiate without an endpoint; we need a clear role from Washington, and we want to know if you are a mediator or a judge or facilitator of the negotiations." (AFP)

Israel should have accepted a set of US guarantees in exchange for extending a freeze on West Bank settlement construction, Israeli opposition leader Tzipi Livni said in a televised interview on ABC News. (ABC News, Haaretz)

Israel will not discuss final status issues in talks with the Palestinians with "a stopwatch in hand", a senior Israeli lawmaker said, responding to US pressure for new peace negotiations. "It is neither logical nor in Israel's interest to negotiate with a stopwatch in hand," Environment Minister Gilad Erdan, who is considered close to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, told Israeli public radio. (AFP)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu disavowed remarks by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak at the Saban Forum supporting the division of Jerusalem in a future peace deal with the Palestinians, officials said. "The Defense Minister's comments were not coordinated with the Prime Minister," an official in Mr. Netanyahu's office told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. (AFP)

In a joint interview with ABC's Christiane Amanpour, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Israeli Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni agreed that peace was a common interest and that trust between the two sides must be restored. In the interview, Mr. Fayyad said that Palestinians want the Israeli occupation to end in 2011, while Ms. Livni said that she believed that "a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians was in Israel's interest, and not a favour to US President Obama. When asked whether he planned to declare a Palestinian State unilaterally, Mr. Fayyad said,

"What we are committed to is statehood. Not a declaration of statehood; we're looking for a State..." (*ynetnews.com*)

PA President Abbas asked the United States to press Israel to cancel the eviction of Mohammed Abu Tir, a Hamas lawmaker, from Jerusalem (*Xinhua*)

Israeli authorities released anti-wall activist Adeeab Abu Rahmah after detaining him for 18 months. He had been convicted of "incitement" for his role in organizing non-violent weekly protests against the separation wall in Bil'in. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

13

The IDF arrested 31 Palestinians overnight in the West Bank. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu hailed a US decision to drop efforts to achieve a building freeze in Jewish settlements. "The US has understood, after a year and half, that we were in a pointless discussion about the marginal issue of building in settlements," he told delegates at the Globes Business Conference in Tel Aviv. "The US has understood that what is important is to reach the real issues, including the core issues at the heart of the conflict between us and the Palestinians," he said. (*Reuters, AFP, www.pmo.gov.il*)

EU Foreign Ministers were set to reaffirm today the bloc's readiness to recognize a Palestinian State "when appropriate", diplomatic sources said.

A draft statement seen by AFP expressed regret over Israel's refusal to freeze settlements, describing them as "illegal" and "an obstacle to peace". The draft, to be put to the bloc's 27 Foreign Ministers for their assent later today, also welcomes a recent World Bank assessment that the PA "will be ready for statehood in the near future." (*AFP*)

Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, Saeb Erakat, today urged the EU to recognize an independent Palestinian State, in a letter to the bloc's Foreign Ministers. (*AFP*)

The German Government said that reports were false that Germany had proposed a resolution for the EU to recognize an independent Palestinian State within a year if no peace agreement was reached by then. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Stefan Bredohl said that the report in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* "is entirely unfounded". (*AP*)

When asked at a press briefing whether US Middle East Envoy Mitchell would be bringing proposals during his current Middle East visit, US State Department Acting Deputy Spokesman Mark C. Toner [made reference](#) to Secretary Hillary Clinton's speech of 10 December in which she said that the US was going to offer bridging proposals as deemed necessary. He said that the US could not impose a solution. This is something that both parties have to want and work towards. He said that Mrs. Clinton had underscored US resolve, adding "We're not discouraged. We realize that when one way is blocked, we're going to seek another, and we're not going to lose hope. Neither should the people of the region. We're going to continue to advance this process any way possible". (*www.state.gov*)

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu met with visiting US envoy George Mitchell where he told the latter that he was prepared to discuss all of the essential issues necessary for resuming negotiations with the Palestinians and reaching a peace agreement. (*Haaretz*)

PA President Abbas was due in Cairo on 15 December to discuss the current situation at a ministerial meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee of the Arab League. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Homes of Palestinian refugees living in camps in Gaza suffered serious damage from the stormy weather which hit the region over the past two days, civil defence officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a [report](#), the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, accused Israeli police of arresting Palestinian minors as young as five in East Jerusalem. The report said that the police arrested at least 81 Palestinian minors between November 2009 and October 2010 on suspicion of throwing stones in the Silwan neighbourhood. (*AP*)

The Palestinian Supreme Court in Ramallah annulled a June decision by the PA Cabinet to postpone municipal elections. The Court ruled the 10 June decision illegal, and called on the Government to set a new date as soon as possible. (*Ma'an News agency*)

Israeli troops opened fire on Palestinians collecting rubble from buildings destroyed during Operation Cast Lead north of Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, and injured two of them in the lower legs. (IMEMC)

Local residents from a small Bedouin encampment in the south Hebron hills said that five wells and several sheds were destroyed by Israeli Civil Administration staff. (Ma'an News agency)

The US State Department said that the meeting between US Middle East Envoy Mitchell and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was "a long and positive discussion – the best way to approach the substantive core issues and advance towards our goal of peace". (AFP)

After meeting with PA President Abbas in Ramallah, US Envoy Mitchell said that Washington remained "determined to persevere" in its efforts to see an independent and viable Palestinian State living alongside a secure Israel. Mr. Mitchell was on his way to Cairo. (Haaretz)

Addressing thousands of supporters in Katiba Square, west of Gaza City, Hamas Leader Ismail Haniyeh spoke during a celebration marking the twenty-third anniversary of the founding of Hamas. He said that Hamas will never recognize Israel. He went on to say that given fair conditions, Hamas would win another landslide victory in all Palestinian areas. (Ma'an News Agency)

PLO Secretary-General Yasser Abed Rabbo said: "The Palestinian leadership calls for a broad international effort to ensure the protection of the peace process, including an urgent meeting of the Quartet, to lay the foundation for a renewal of the peace process." (AFP)

Following meetings with PA President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad and UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi, Australia's Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, announced in Ramallah that his country's support would continue to help the Palestinian people gain access to health, education, housing and social services. "Australia will provide three years of predictable base funding of up to \$18 million to [UNRWA]," Mr. Rudd's office said. (www.foreignminister.gov.au)

Israeli bulldozers demolished two Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, both under construction. Officials stated that they were executing a municipal order and that the homes lacked permits. (Ma'an News Agency)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert H. Serry [briefed](#) the Security Council on "the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". (Security Council press release SC/10115)

Muslims, Christians and Jewish religious leaders took part in an interreligious conference in Bethlehem. More than 300 participants had registered to join in the event. (Ma'an News agency)

15

Israeli forces arrested nine Palestinians from Hebron. In a statement, the Israeli military said that weaponry, including one shotgun, had been discovered in one suspect's home. Seven Palestinians were arrested by the Israeli military in a series of raids near Tulkarm, Tubas, Jenin and Ramallah, PNN reported. (IMEMC)

Following a meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo, US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell said, "In the day ahead, our discussions with both sides will be substantive, two-way conversations, with an eye towards making real progress in the next few months on the key questions of an eventual framework agreement." (AFP)

The London-based Arabic-language *Al-Hayat* newspaper reported that US Envoy George Mitchell had presented a document of "unofficial" offers to PA President Abbas in Ramallah. The paper cited Palestinian officials as saying that according to Mr. Mitchell's offer, the discussion on borders would be shared with Egypt and Jordan. He had also offered "a logical and just solution for the issue of refugees," an agreement on water distribution and "a debate on the claims of both sides to Jerusalem." However, nothing was offered in the way of a withdrawal by Israel to the 1967 borders, or from East Jerusalem. (Ynetnews)

Yediot Ahronot reported that senior White House adviser Dennis Ross was holding talks in Israel with top defence officials in connection with US attempts to revive the peace process. Mr. Ross had arrived late on Tuesday for two days of meetings, which would include talks with outgoing Israeli Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and Shin Bet Chief Yuval Diskin. His visit was made at the request of President Obama and

Secretary of State Clinton in order to establish some ideas of what Israel's security needs would be for final status negotiations, according to the paper. (AFP)

According to a statement read by Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa, Arab foreign ministers, after meeting PA President Abbas in Cairo and US Special Envoy George Mitchell, had decided that "resuming the negotiations will be conditioned on receiving a serious offer that guarantees an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict". The Arab League Follow-up Committee "sees that the direction of talks has become ineffective and it has decided against the resumption of negotiations," he said. The ministers also decided "to bring up the issue of settlements to the Security Council," wanting the UN body to adopt a resolution "that confirms ... the illegal nature of this activity and that would oblige Israel to stop it." They also called on the US not to obstruct such a move. Mr. Moussa said that Arab ambassadors had been told "to demand an emergency meeting of the Security Council." (AFP)

The US House of Representatives approved a resolution opposing a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. It calls on the US Administration to "deny recognition to any unilaterally declared Palestinian State and veto any resolution by the Security Council to establish or recognize a Palestinian State outside of an agreement negotiated by the two parties", and calls upon foreign Governments not to extend such recognition. (Haaretz)

Norwegian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bjoern Svenungsen said that the Ministry would upgrade the status of the Palestinian representation in the country from "general delegation" to "diplomatic mission," in recognition of efforts to build a Palestinian State. The decision was announced during a visit by PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to Norway. Mr. Svenungsen said that the top Palestinian diplomat in Oslo would have the rank of an ambassador but use the title "head of the Palestinian mission". The upgrade would take effect early next year. (AP)

The emergency room at Gaza City's Al-Quds Hospital, which was damaged during Israel's invasion in late 2008, reopened as part of a €2 million project funded by France. "These rehabilitation works started in February 2010 and required the entry of numerous building materials, which was facilitated by the commitments obtained by France from the Israeli Government," the French Consulate in Jerusalem said in a statement. At a ceremony opening the new facility, Consul-General Frederic Desagneaux said, "Our commitment to Al-Quds Hospital will continue; our commitment to the needs of the people of Gaza will continue." (AFP)

A Saudi delegation, headed by Prince Turki bin Talal bin Abdul-Aziz, arrived at El-Arish Airport in Egypt with a cargo of about 65 tons of medical aid bound for the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli settlers said that they were building 18 apartments at a religious school on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. (AP)

Israel had no intention of apologizing to the Turkish Government for the IDF raid on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon told the Knesset. (Haaretz)

16

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath said that he had asked France, Britain, Sweden and Denmark, as well as the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process to recognize the 1967 borders between Israel and the Palestinian State. (AP, Haaretz)

"We want a State of Palestine, not a unilateral declaration of statehood," PA Prime Minister Fayyad told Israel's *Channel 2*. He explained that he did not see how a unilateral declaration of statehood would assist the Palestinian cause. He added, "It is not and will not be a part of our thinking." (The Jerusalem Post)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton said in a statement: "I have met Senator Mitchell... to discuss the latest developments in the peace process.... We recognize that our common goals for peace and security in the Middle East should be achieved through negotiations and with the support of the international community. The US and the EU have recommended immediate engagement by the parties with the US on the core issues of the conflict..." (www.consilium.europa.eu)

Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu convened his inner Cabinet to discuss US ideas on the peace process, officials said. (AFP)

The French Government said it had "taken note" of the Arab League position on future peace talks. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bernard Valero said that France was calling on the whole international community "to contribute to the success of the American efforts to restart the peace

process," with the aim, by the end of next year, of getting "a framework agreement with a view to the creation of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State". "The path of negotiations remains, in our eyes, the best means to arrive at this objective," he stated. (KUNA)

The PA Ministry of Health announced that it had received from the Slovakian Government a shipment of equipment and medical supplies with an estimated value of some \$400,000. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA official in charge of Jerusalem affairs, Ahmad Ruweidi, condemned Israel's plan to renovate and expand the Seven Arches Hotel in East Jerusalem, confiscated from its Jordanian owners when Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, calling the plan an example of Israel's ongoing attempts to "Judaize" Arab, Muslim and Palestinian landmarks around the City. (Ma'an News Agency)

The PA announced that it would challenge in court a draft Israeli law prohibiting Palestinian prisoners from family visits. (Ma'an News Agency)

Entitled "Breaking the Silence", a book published by a group of veteran Israeli combat soldiers of the same name, collected testimonies and photographs from troops who had served in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The book, whose target audience is ordinary Israelis, tries to show that, contrary to the army's claims that its actions were purely defensive, the policy on the ground was "an offensive one, which included expropriation of territory, tightening control over the civilian population and instilling fear," according to the publishers. (AFP)

Two Palestinians were arrested near Ramallah and two others in the town of Dhahiriyya. (IMEMC)

17

Bolivia announced officially that it would recognize the State of Palestine along the 1967 borders. PA President Abbas welcomed Bolivia's announcement. (Asharq Al-Awsat)

Malta's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tonio Borg, concluded [a three-day visit](#) to Israel and the OPT. He signed a memorandum of understanding with PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki providing for the establishment of a joint political committee that would "formalize a higher level of political dialogue", the Maltese Foreign Ministry said. A second memorandum of understanding was signed with PA Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology Mashhour Abu Daqqa, according to which Malta would "provide expertise in eGovernment and eLearning." Mr. Borg also visited Gaza, where he toured an EU-funded waste water treatment plant and the Gaza port and met with UNRWA officials and other representatives. Mr. Borg told a news conference: "Malta is interested in launching projects for the benefit of Gaza. ... We will financially assist UNRWA in this respect." He added: "I feel that the visits which have taken place in recent months by different Foreign Ministers from the European Union have made a difference. ... The fact that now we are agreeing on certain things about Gaza is a step in the right direction." (AFP, www.foreign.gov.mt)

The EU said that the following day it would launch this year's fourth quarterly payment of social allowances to over 56,400 vulnerable Palestinian households across the West Bank and Gaza. The payment, co-financed by the PA and the EU, would reach a total amount of just under €11.5 million. (www.reliefweb.int)

Crossing terminals for the transfer of aid and commercial goods into Gaza were closed by Israeli officials. OCHA said in a report that wheat reserves inside Gaza remained "extremely low, due to the limited operation of the conveyer belt at the Karni crossing." (Ma'an News Agency)

EU heads of mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah urged EU ministers to implement the European policy in Jerusalem in a "more active and visible" way and use meetings between Israeli and European officials to convey a "clear and consistent" message on East Jerusalem. Other recommendations included promoting the establishment of a PLO representative in Jerusalem and adopting EU legislation to stop European investments supporting settlements. (IMEMC)

Israel's Civil Administration had reportedly decided to appropriate about 12 acres of land from the Palestinian village of Beit Iksha, located near the "Ramot" settlement, to improve train infrastructure and set up access roads for work conducted by Israel Railways in the area. (Ynetnews)

At a press conference in New York, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#), "We will seek to advance the Middle East peace process to

realize the two-State solution, despite the absence of direct talks. I once again urge the parties to engage seriously and be forthcoming on substance. A meeting of the Quartet principals is expected early in the new year.” He added: “We will also continue to focus on improving life in Gaza. And I repeat: Israel must meet its obligation to freeze all settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem”. (*UN press release SG/SM/13324*)

18

Israeli warplanes struck central Gaza, killing five Palestinian militants as they were about to launch a rocket attack, according to the Israeli army and witnesses. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian Legislative Council member Nabil Sha'ath said that "negotiating on Israel's terms" had amounted to a failed strategy. He said that Palestinians should follow the South African model of popular resistance based on peaceful demonstrations, international recruitment, national unity, and building State institutions. Mr. Sha'ath said that PA President Abbas was ready to dismantle the PA if necessary. (*Ma'an New Agency*)

19

Two mortar rounds were fired at Israel. The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades (military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees) said that it had shelled two Israeli military posts on the Gaza-Israel border. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers, accompanied by armoured vehicles and jeeps, surrounded a Bethlehem hospital, demanding emergency room admissions records for the past 48 hours, according to the Director of the hospital, Edmund Shehadeh. They threatened to confiscate a computer containing medical records but ended up leaving the hospital empty handed. (*IMEMC*)

In an interview, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told the Israeli television station *Channel 2* that he thought it was "possible to get this [peace] process to move forward" despite the impasse and urged new talks focused on key conflict issues. "We should not be discouraged because we have failed before; we should not give up," Mr. Fayyad said. (*Reuters*)

Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, Saeb Erakat, said that 10 EU countries would soon upgrade the status of the Palestinian representative offices in their capitals in a show of support for Palestinian State-building efforts. (*Ma'an New Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

In a speech at a joint session of the Egyptian Parliament, President Hosni Mubarak warned Israel over its strategy in the Middle East and blamed Israel for the stalled peace process. He said that the US and the Quartet should take responsibility over stalled negotiations on the Palestinian issue. (*Xinhua*)

In a statement, Hamas asked UNRWA to stop exposing Palestinian children to the Holocaust during trips organized for outstanding students from Gaza, and instead concentrate on the suffering of Palestinian victims. (*The Guardian*)

More than 200 Israelis and Palestinians travelled to the muqataa to hear their host, PA President Abbas. Israeli supporters of the Geneva Initiative who arrived in Ramallah included Knesset members from the Labour, Meretz, Kadima and Likud parties; former IDF officers; members of the Bereaved Families Forum, the Peres Peace Centre, and Peace Now. In his talk, Mr. Abbas focused on the agreement that had been reached in the past with former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which included the deployment of a force, most likely from NATO, led by the US, after an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. (*Haaretz*)

A [report](#) published by Human Rights Watch entitled “Separate and Unequal, Israel’s Discriminatory Treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” compared Israel’s starkly different treatment of settlements and next-door Palestinian communities. It called on the US and EU to avoid supporting policies that violated international law. (www.hrw.org)

20

The National Resistance Brigades, a group affiliated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said in a statement that it had fired three shells at an Israeli military base east of the Maghazi refugee camp. The Israeli army said that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had fired seven mortar shells that fell on open ground in Israel, causing no casualties. (*AFP*)

Israeli warplanes carried out four attacks in Gaza, injuring two Palestinian fighters, according to Palestinian and Israeli officials. The raids came after Palestinians had fired nine mortar shells into southern Israel that fell on open ground and caused no casualties. (*Ma'an News Agency*,

Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

An IDF soldier said that three Arabs carrying a knife had attacked him and attempted to kidnap him near the "Givat Ze'ev" settlement north of Jerusalem. (*Haaretz*)

The IDF received instructions to ease the passage of Christian tourists and pilgrims through military checkpoints during the Christmas period. (*AFP*)

The IDF was set to deploy tanks protected by a new missile interception system along the Gaza Strip beginning in 2011, in light of intelligence assessments indicating a rising threat of anti-tank missile attacks by Gaza militant groups. (*Haaretz, Xinhua*)

The Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Rafael Barak, sent classified cables to Israeli envoys abroad instructing them to begin "urgent" diplomatic activity to thwart Palestinian efforts to draft a UN resolution to recognize a unilateral declaration of statehood and put international pressure on Israel to halt settlement construction. Envoys should engage with the bureaus of the premiers, foreign ministers, and parliaments in each respective country. The envoys also received a "legal position paper" which they were instructed to pass on to their interlocutors, expressing the view that only direct negotiations could end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and not unilateral action that subverted past accords. "Advancing a UN resolution on the issue of settlements won't bring the sides back to negotiations," Mr. Barak wrote in the cable, adding, "It can only hurt attempts to renew talks." (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian Ambassador to Brazil, Ibrahim Az-Zein, received the title to a piece of land where the Palestinian Embassy in Brazil would stand, following that country's recognition of a Palestinian State earlier in the month. (*Ma'an News Agency, IMEMC*)

Bethlehem's Governor, Abdel Fattah Hamayel, stated that Bethlehem's markets were 100 per cent free of settlement products. The Governor said that there had been attempts to smuggle settlement products into Bethlehem, but the PA would continue to counter them, especially since these products harmed local businesses and the Palestinian economy. (*IMEMC*)

The Popular Palestinian Committees, a grassroots organization based in Hebron, launched a campaign urging West Bank residents to open cemeteries outside their villages on land administered by the Israeli military. Distributing Arab cemeteries throughout the West Bank, the group believed, would undermine any Israeli attempt to take permanent control of the area. (*The Australian*)

21

Israeli forces entered the northern West Bank town of An-Nasiriyya and arrested three Palestinians. In the southern West Bank village of Al-Khadr, Israeli forces broke into several homes to deliver summons telling residents they must appear in front of Israeli intelligence officials for interrogations. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

IDF conducted strikes against eight Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip, including four Hamas-run smuggling tunnels near the border with Egypt, as well as arms depots and militant bases, IDF Chief of General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi said. (*Haaretz, IMEMC*)

A Qassam rocket struck near a kindergarten in Ashkelon, lightly wounding an Israeli teenage girl in a nearby building. (*Haaretz*)

In an Israeli air strike targeting an area in Rafah, four Palestinians were wounded. The attack targeted an area reportedly used as a training base for the armed wing of Hamas. (*IMEMC*)

At a meeting with Brazilian representatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, PA President Abbas praised Brazil for being the first Latin American country to recognize the Palestinian State, saying that the Palestinians would stick to a peaceful solution as "a strategic option". (*Xinhua*)

Fatah's communications office said that Fatah would never ask "the Israeli occupation for support against any Palestinian side under any circumstances". It described the relevant claims in a leaked Israeli cable as a "forgery and naked conspiracy" by Israeli intelligence in an attempt to widen the gap between rival Palestinian parties. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that he and Fatah Central Committee member Mohammed Shteyel had met with US Special Envoy George Mitchell, his assistant, David Hale, and US National Security Council member, Dan Shapiro, but the meeting did not signify the resumption of talks with Israel. (*IMEMC*)

Two senior Likud party members proposed that in the absence of peace, Israel should pull large numbers of settlers out of the West Bank while

leaving its soldiers in place. [Minister of Improvement of Government Services] Michael Eitan said on his website that an Israeli pullout from parts of the West Bank was inevitable, and called on the Government to decide which parts of the West Bank would be ceded in any peace deal, and then persuade settlers to accept compensation and leave, replacing them with troops. [Deputy Prime Minister] Dan Meridor had also been promoting a similar idea. Mark Regev, Spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, said that the ministers "are representing their own opinion and not that of the Prime Minister". (AP)

Israeli officials opened a single transport terminal, Kerem Shalom, for the transfer of commercial goods, fuel and humanitarian aid. Among the 180-190 truckloads of expected goods were seven loads of construction equipment and materials bound for UN projects. Limited amounts of domestic-use gas and industrial diesel fuel were also set for delivery. The bulk goods crossing terminal, Karni, was closed. Six loads of strawberries left Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel approved funding for renovations at 16 historical and cultural sites, including Herod's Tomb in the West Bank, the Government said. The Tomb of the Patriarchs (Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi) in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb (Masjid Bilal or Qubbat Rakhil) in Bethlehem were not on the list. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights filed a petition before the Israeli High Court of Justice on behalf of 1,046 victims of Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip, saying that the closure policy prevented these victims from meeting with their Israeli lawyers and from entering Israel in order to testify before Israeli courts. (www.pchrgaza.org)

Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process [condemned](#) the firing of indiscriminate mortars and rockets by militant groups in Gaza at Israel. "Israel has a right to self-defence consistent with international humanitarian law. I urge Israel to exercise maximum restraint and take every precaution to ensure that its forces do not endanger civilians in Gaza," the statement said. (www.unsco.org) Maxwell Gaylard, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, visited a recently demolished Palestinian home in East Jerusalem. Noting the 45 per cent increase in demolitions over the past year, he said the "Government of Israel must take immediate steps to cease demolitions and evictions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem". (Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

22

Israeli forces detained a Palestinian from the Nur Shams refugee camp east of Tulkarm, family members said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas Spokesman Taher Nunu said that Hamas would file a complaint with the UN against Israeli air raids on Gaza, a day after Israel had complained to the Security Council over the firing of rockets into its territory from Gaza. (AFP)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that the PA feared Israel would launch a new large-scale attack on Gaza, following escalated tensions in the area. Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, Dan Meridor, said that Israel could not accept continued rocket fire and that he hoped another large-scale offensive in the territory would not be necessary. (The Jerusalem Post)

Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine reaffirmed their rejection of resuming the peace negotiations without Israel stopping settlement building. The issue of the settlements "should be put before international bodies, including the Security Council and the General Assembly", the joint statement said. (Xinhua)

PA President Abbas told the EU Representative to the PA Christian Berger: "Any new Israeli offensive on Gaza will place the peace process under real risk, it will cause a collapse of the international efforts trying to rescue the process." (Ma'an News Agency)

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's air strikes on the Gaza Strip this week, calling them an attempt to deflect attention from the failed peace process. "We condemn these air strikes. They contribute nothing but add to the tension and inflame negative feelings towards Israel," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hussam Zaki said in a press statement. (Haaretz)

During his weekly news conference, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said: "It is time that disagreements between the Palestinians come to an end", adding that the continued state of rivalry between Palestinian factions only fuelled what he called the "Israeli project to separate the West

Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem and render the establishment of a Palestinian State impossible.” Mr. Fayyad said: "Just like there will be no State without Jerusalem, there will be no State without Gaza." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair said that the US decision to abandon attempts to pressure Israel to agree to a new partial settlement freeze was a "setback". He said that Israel now needed to find other ways to reassure the Palestinians that "statehood is a genuine possibility". "Subject to genuine Israeli security worries, they should be lifting the weight of occupation for the Palestinians and giving them as much help and permission to develop as possible," he said. (*The Guardian*)

The Foreign Office of the United Kingdom confirmed that it was studying a proposal that would see Palestinian "General Delegations" upgraded to "Diplomatic Missions" in a number of European capitals. But a Foreign Office spokesman said that the upgrade did not "imply recognition of a Palestinian State". (*The Daily Telegraph*)

The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference sent letters to the foreign ministers of the permanent members of the Security Council to draw their attention to the threats facing the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He also called on them to prevent Israel's persistence in its aggression and to allow Islamic Endowments to implement the required maintenance works in the Mosque. (www.oic-oci.org)

The Syrian 29th humanitarian aid convoy set off for the Gaza Strip carrying 80 tons of foodstuffs and medical supplies. (*SANA*)

The European Commission decided to provide an initial financial package worth €100 million for the Occupied Palestinian Territory under the 2011 budget. (www.europa.eu)

At the conclusion of its extraordinary session, the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League affirmed the importance of continued support of the resilience of Jerusalem in the face of Israeli practices. The session called for continued support to the Palestinian people in Gaza, in addition to continuing Arab action at the UN and relevant organizations to activate international agreements on protecting civilians in times of war and under occupation. (*SANA*)

Israel's Chargé d'affaires, Meron Reuben, criticized the draft Security Council resolution condemning Israel's settlement activity. He said that "the Palestinian attempts to bypass this road only move us further away from returning to the negotiation table and reaching a two-State solution".

"We hope that the international community won't allow these moves to divert both sides from reaching the real goal – peace and stability in our region," he added. (*Haaretz*)

23

The Israeli military opened fire on two Palestinians travelling in a car in Hebron, wounding both. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli army troops opened fire on a number of Palestinians in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, leaving four of them wounded. The victims were identified as a farmer and three other civilians collecting rubble. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli troops arrested three Palestinians near Jenin. (*IMEMC*)

Uruguay's Foreign Minister, Luis Almagro, told reporters that the decision to formally recognize a sovereign Palestinian State had been taken, although officials were studying the implications of that decision with regard to international law and politics. (*Haaretz*)

Officials from the northern West Bank village of Madama accused settlers from Yizhar of attacking a group of farmers ploughing lands near the settlement fence. Farmers responded by throwing stones back at the group, who eventually left the area. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to the Israeli movement Peace Now, Israeli settlement construction had witnessed a rapid increase. Israel started the construction of more than 1,712 units in several settlements, and construction is currently underway in more than 50 per cent of settlements. (*IMEMC*)

Israel would allow farmers and private businessmen to export goods from Gaza for the first time since Hamas took power, *Army Radio* quoted an Israeli defence official as saying. The goods will be allowed to exit Gaza even if they were not labelled as an "international project" – which was previously the only way such exports had been allowed by Israel. (*Haaretz*)

Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, issued [a statement](#) on his efforts to de-escalate the situation in Southern Israel and Gaza: "The UN does not want to see any renewed intensification of conflict and has been sending a message of utmost restraint and concern for the protection of civilians in Gaza and Israel. I am encouraged that we are hearing a clear desire from all concerned to de-escalate the situation and respect calm and I appeal for an end to acts of violence." (www.reliefweb.int)

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Ecuador formally recognized Palestine as an independent State. (*AFP*)

25

The Government of Japan extended a ¥1 billion (\$11.9 million) grant to the PA, officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said that Turkey wanted improved ties with Israel, but Israel must apologize and offer compensation for its deadly raid on the aid flotilla. Prime Minister Netanyahu said in an interview: "They (Turkey) want an apology and we of course do not want to apologize. We are prepared to express regret, as we have, on the loss of life, etc." (*Anatolia News Agency, Reuters*)

26

Two members of the Islamic Jihad were killed by Israel in the Gaza Strip. (*MENA*)

Paraguay plans to recognize an independent Palestinian State next year, the PA said. (*Xinhua*)

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat announced that the eviction of settlers from the contentious "Beit Yonatan" settlement in East Jerusalem would be postponed. The decision was made after settlers agreed not to press for the eviction of a Palestinian family living in a nearby building, which reportedly housed a synagogue until 1948. (*Haaretz*)

27

Six Palestinian demonstrators were injured during clashes with Israeli soldiers near Ramallah, when around 700 Palestinians and 200 foreign activists attended a demonstration to protest against settlements and the separation wall. (*Xinhua*)

The Israeli navy intercepted a Palestinian fishing boat off the northern Gaza Strip, a military official said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that if negotiations did not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he could seek an interim accord instead of a comprehensive deal. In an interview with Israeli *Channel 10 TV*, Mr. Netanyahu said that he would not divide Jerusalem and would insist on an Israeli military presence in the Jordan River valley. "For the Palestinians, any suggestion of reaching an interim agreement is unacceptable because it omits Jerusalem and the issue of refugees," Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for PA President Abbas, said. (*AP, Reuters, www.aljazeera.net*)

Asked to respond to comments by the Israeli Foreign Minister that a peace deal with the Palestinians was impossible and that the PA was not legitimate, the US State Department Acting Spokesman, Mark Toner, said during a [press briefing](#): "It doesn't change our posture or our policy one bit. We continue to work to bring both parties back into direct negotiations and to achieve a comprehensive settlement." Asked about the growing list of South American countries recognizing a Palestinian State, Mr. Toner said: "We've been very, very clear about our concerns regarding unilateral actions by either party that would in any way jeopardize what remains our ultimate goal, which is to return to direct negotiations and to reach a final – or a comprehensive settlement, a peace settlement... We would believe that Palestinian efforts for unilateral independence would fall into that category." (www.state.gov)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said that among the Organization's top priorities in 2011 was the issue of Middle East peace and Palestine. The Arab League was gearing for a summit on the topic of Jerusalem in Qatar in early February. (*DPA*)

Some 7,000 Palestinians emigrate from the Occupied Palestinian Territory each year, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said in a [report](#), to seek work, education and a better life. One third of them are between the ages of 15 and 29. They tend to go to Jordan, the Gulf countries and the US. (*Xinhua*)

An aid ship backed by Asian activists will soon set sail from Syria, a spokesman for Palestinian groups based in Syria said. The Sierra Leone-flagged Asia 1 was awaiting the green light from Egypt to sail to the Egyptian port of El-Arish. Israel was reportedly tracking the Asian aid ship. (AFP, Fox News)

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip marked two years since Israel's "Operation Cast Lead." In Jabalya, north of Gaza City, about 1,000 people attended a rally organised by the Islamic Jihad movement, chanting for "resistance" against Israel. (AFP)

A prominent left-wing Israeli activist, Jonathan Pollak, was sentenced to jail for three months and fined 1,500 shekels (\$420) for taking part in a 2008 bicycle protest against the blockade of Gaza. The Association of Civil Rights in Israel said the sentence was an "extreme punishment" and raised suspicion that Mr. Pollak was "targeted to silence him and prevent him from partaking in acts of protest". (Belfast Telegraph)

28

Israeli forces shot a Palestinian worker east of Gaza City, local medics said. The 19-year-old had been collecting cement aggregate near the border. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli gunfire and tank shelling killed one Palestinian and wounded five others east of Khan Yunis in Gaza today, a Palestinian medical source and witnesses told AFP. (AFP)

The IDF killed 22-year-old Hassan Abu Rok Qadeeh, a Palestinian militant, and wounded five others east of Khan Yunis, a Palestinian medical source said. Witnesses said that Mr. Qadeeh was a member of the Popular Resistance Committees responsible for mortar fire into Israel in recent weeks. An Israeli army spokesperson said that soldiers had fired on members of a "terrorist" cell that had been trying to place explosives near the barrier separating Gaza from Israel. (AFP)

Hamas convened a meeting of Palestinian factions, with the exception of Fatah, where they discussed rocket fire, tensions with Israel and measures not to provide Israel with a pretext for escalating aggression. Khader Habib, a leader of the Islamic Jihad, said that there was a consensus on the need to coordinate a response to the aggression. (AFP)

Officials say that the draft Security Council resolution on settlements could be introduced as early as February. "As far as the settlements are concerned, we are going to go to the Security Council," Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, told journalists in a recent briefing, adding: "We urge the Americans not to stand in our way". (The Financial Times)

The Palestinian Diplomatic Representative in Brazil, Ibrahim al-Zeben said that PA President Abbas would be laying the symbolic first stone of a Palestinian embassy in Brasilia on 31 December. He was expected to attend the inauguration ceremony for Brazil's new President, Dilma Rousseff the following day. (AFP)

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon had compared the recognition of a Palestinian State to using the "like" button on Facebook, writing in his personal blog that "the state of Facebook is more real than the State of Palestine". (Haaretz)

In January 2010, former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, had already discussed with the US the idea of recognizing a Palestinian State regardless of the outcome of negotiations with Israel, a US cable released by WikiLeaks revealed. (The Jerusalem Post)

"The PA is progressing gradually with its plan to enforce a boycott on work in Israeli settlements by encouraging labourers to abstain from taking jobs there," PA Spokesman Ghassan Khatib said, in response to Israeli media reports that suggested that the PA had decided to reduce restrictions on Palestinians seeking work in settlements. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA National Economy Minister Hassan Abu Libdeh told Cabinet Ministers that the PA was on track to achieve a total settlement boycott by 2011, and had already totally removed settlement products from Palestinian shops in the West Bank. The Cabinet also approved an appeal to individuals and institutions still receiving or providing services to settlements, to stop immediately. Mr. Abu Libdeh said that the PA continued efforts to provide jobs to Palestinians as alternatives for work in settlements. (Ma'an News Agency)

Settlers from the "Suseya" settlement attacked a nearby Palestinian village in the south Hebron hills overnight, setting fire to a tent, witnesses told Christian Peacemaker Teams and Operation Dove, who maintain a presence in the area. (Ma'an News Agency)

Dozens of Israeli companies signed contracts with the PA to work in developing the new Palestinian city of Rawabi, in which they agreed to refrain

from using materials from Israeli suppliers based in settlements, *Army Radio* reported. Israeli right-wing politicians responded angrily to the report. In response, Peace Now Secretary-General Yariv Oppenheimer said, "If the Palestinians want to build their country without the assistance of the settlements and their products, it is completely legitimate." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

As many as 90 per cent of Palestinian prisoners being interrogated by Shin Bet were prevented from consulting with an attorney, even though civilian and military legislation state clearly that such prohibition should be rarely applied, according to a [report](#) published by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel and the Palestinian Prisoners' Society. While prisoners were kept from meeting with lawyers, Shin Bet utilized illegal interrogation methods such as tying prisoners for a long time to chairs, sleep deprivation, threats (usually of harming family members), humiliation and being kept for long periods in unsanitary cells. (*Haaretz*)

Israel's Ministry of Defense accused the London-based Palestinian Return Centre of "terror-affiliated activities" and of being the organizational arm of Hamas in Europe. The statement said that the group organizes conferences in Europe at which it plays taped speeches by Hamas leaders banned from entering the EU. "The Centre is involved in initiating and organizing radical and violent activity against Israel in Europe, while delegitimizing Israel's status as a nation among the European community," the statement said. (*AFP*)

29

The armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine released a statement saying that its fighters had opened fire on Israeli soldiers carrying out maintenance work north of Beit Hanoun. An Israeli military spokesperson said that soldiers operating in Gaza heard gunfire, but reported no injuries. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A draft of a Security Council resolution obtained by *AP* calls the settlements obstacles to peace but does not ask for sanctions against Israel or any other concrete action. (*AP*)

US State Department Acting Spokesman Mark Toner [said](#): "Final status issues can only be resolved through negotiations between the parties and not by recourse to the UN Security Council, so we have consistently opposed any attempt to take these kinds of issues to the Council." (www.state.gov)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that Palestinians expected wider recognition of their statehood in the coming year and it would mean more than a "Facebook state," an earlier analogy by Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon. Mr. Fayyad said recognition by many countries would "enshrine" the Palestinians' right to a State in all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, recalling that 17 years of peace efforts had failed to deliver this promise. (*Reuters*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, denied earlier reports in which he was quoted as saying that the PA planned on requesting the Security Council to recognize a Palestinian State along 1967 borders. He told *Ynetnews*: "They are false. We plan to turn to the Security Council regarding the settlements, not the declaration of a Palestinian State." (*Ynetnews*)

Eleven structures in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of At-Tur were demolished by Israeli forces, and several dunums of lands bulldozed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Farmers in the town of Asira Al-Qibliya, south-west of Nablus, reported that settlers from the neighbouring settlement of "Yizhar" had attacked them for the second day in a row. PA official Ghassan Daghlis said that half a dozen settlers had torched lands. At the same time, in Sinjil, south of Nablus, Israeli forces closed the main thoroughfare as dozens of settlers, positioned near the "Shilo" settlement, threw stones at Palestinian cars, breaking several windshields. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs said that Israeli forces had detained 1,100 Palestinian children in 2010. The arrests were concentrated in East Jerusalem, where 500 children were detained, and in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

30

The year 2010 saw the fewest militant attacks against Israel and the least number of Israeli casualties in a decade, Shin Bet said. Nine Israelis had been killed by Palestinian militants, down from 15 in 2009 and a high of 452 in 2002. For the second year in a row, there had been no

suicide bombings. One hundred and fifty rockets and 215 mortars had been launched, down from 569 rockets and 289 mortars in 2009, and 2,048 rockets and 1,668 mortars in 2008. (AFP)

"[Palestinian groups] agreed to halt one of the means of armed resistance, which is firing rockets at Israel, to avoid the Israeli threats," Dawood Shihab, a spokesman for the Islamic Jihad, said in a statement e-mailed to journalists. "But the armed resistance will keep active in other means such as confronting raids and incursions," he said. (DPA)

Prime Minister Netanyahu said achieving peace would require Palestinians to "give up their right of return, because it is impossible to have a Jewish State and in parallel to flood it with Palestinian refugees." "This conflict continues because there is a refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish State and bring an end to the conflict," Mr. Netanyahu said at the Foreign Ministry's annual meeting of Israeli ambassadors. (UPI)

Israeli authorities informed Palestinian crossings officials that between 190 and 200 truckloads of goods, including 20 new cars and 5 truckloads of cement for UNRWA projects, were to be allowed into Gaza via Kerem Shalom. Limited quantities of domestic gas and industrial diesel fuel would be pumped through the same crossing, a crossings officer said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A leading Palestinian businessman was bidding to take over a failed real-estate venture in East Jerusalem, upsetting Israeli settlers. "Nof Tzion" was marketed two years ago to wealthy US Jews as a luxury residence with a panoramic vista of Jerusalem's Old City. The Israeli developer had been unable to complete the project. The Palestinian businessman said that if his bid were successful, he planned to offer houses in subsequent phases to Palestinians. (The Wall Street Journal)

Israeli troops seized a Palestinian Legislative Committee member from Hamas, the fifth to be rearrested recently after serving previous prison terms, local officials said. Khalil al-Rabai had been arrested at his home in the village of Yatta, south of Hebron, municipal council officials said.

(AFP)

31

A rocket was fired into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip overnight without causing casualties or damage, the Israeli military said. (AFP)

A Palestinian woman died after being tear-gassed by Israeli troops at an anti-wall protest in Bil'in. (AFP)

Dubai's Police Chief, Dahi Khalfan Tamim, said that Israel had urged the United Arab Emirates not to publish the pictures of the suspects involved in the killing of Hamas official Mahmoud al-Mabhouh earlier this year. (DPA)

PA President Abbas said: "We demand that the Middle East Quartet and the various UN bodies, headed by the Security Council, draft a peace plan which conforms with international law, instead of keeping up negotiations which do not solve the problem." Shahr Azrari, an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman, disagreed: "Israel has been quite adamant in the last few months in trying to get the Palestinians to sit with Israel around the negotiating table and only once this option is exhausted should we think about trying to reach new solutions," he told AFP. (AFP, Reuters)

PA President Abbas said that the new attempt to get the Security Council to condemn Israeli settlements was specifically designed to win US support. The draft included language already used by Secretary of State Clinton. "On the Middle East, our view remains unchanged. The only viable path is through a negotiated agreement that resolves the core issues and ends the conflict," said State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley. (AFP, Reuters, Ynetnews)

PA President Abbas laid the first stone of what will become a Palestinian Embassy in Brazil. (AFP)

Palestinian residents of the West Bank village of Jub al-Dib, located in "Area C", had been asking Israel to connect them to infrastructure since 1988, Ynetnews reported. However, they still remain without electricity or running water. (Ynetnews)

More than \$500 million were needed to upgrade the infrastructure in Arab neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, the results of an official Israeli study showed, if it were to be on a par with that available elsewhere in the city (AFP)

The 2011-2012 Israeli budget allocates NIS 2 billion (\$564 million) to settlements, their services and security, and hundreds of millions of shekels more were hidden among the different clauses of the bill. In 2011, 200 housing units will be marketed in "Ma'aleh Adumim", with NIS 58 million allocated to its development in 2011 and NIS 31 million in 2012. In 2011, 500 housing units will be marketed in "Har Homa"; NIS 238 million will be spent on its development over the next two years. The budget also allocated NIS 180 million to a road to the "Pisgat Ze'ev"

settlement, which the Peace Now group said was a clear obstacle to peace, as it cut across areas meant to become a part of the Palestinian State.
(*Haaretz*)

According to Khaled Abdel Megid, a member of the Palestinian National Congress, 120 people from the Asia to Gaza Caravan had been allowed by Egypt to pass, along with \$1 million in supplies, including medicine and electrical generators. But 46 activists from Iran and Jordan had been denied entry, along with 10 generators donated by Iran. (www.ahram.org.eg)
