

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

MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW

**June 2005**

***Monthly highlights***

- Approximately 400 Palestinian prisoners are released by Israel. ([2 June](#))
- G-77 and China Summit in Doha calls for the immediate Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ([13 June](#))
- Prime Minister Sharon and PA President Abbas meet in Jerusalem. ([21 June](#))
- Middle East Quartet meets in London. ([23 June](#))
- G-8 Foreign Ministers discuss the Middle East peace process and Gaza disengagement. ([23 June](#))

**1**

Israeli police said in a statement that it had arrested members of an Islamic Jihad cell preparing two suicide bombings in Jerusalem, along with three people, in Beit Hanina, in north-east Jerusalem, spokesman Shmulik Ben Ruby said. A gag order had initially been placed on details of the arrest but Mr. Ben Ruby said that the five Palestinians arrested were planning to carry out two attacks in Jerusalem on Thursday, one on a bus and another in a bar or club in the city. Police discovered two suicide belts containing a total of 15 kg of explosives to be used in the attacks, with police estimates indicating the two blasts could have caused at least 30 deaths and well over 100 injuries. Mr. Ben Ruby said the detainees came from various parts of the West Bank, with at least one from Bethlehem. (AFP, AP)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat urged the international community to pressure Israel to stop the demolition of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem. "Such a new attack would certainly undermine all efforts to save the stalled peace process," Mr. Erakat told reporters. An Israeli human rights activist, Danny Seidemann, accused the Israel's Jerusalem Municipality of "moral autism", while Palestinian officials warned that the demolitions could spark violence in Arab neighbourhoods. However, a spokesman for the Knesset said legislators were scheduled to debate the issue in the evening. (AP, Xinhua)

Efforts were being exerted to hold a meeting between PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas political bureau chief Khaled Mash'al over election disputes, Palestinian sources said. The meeting was expected to be held before 10 June, either in Damascus where Mr. Mash'al was based or in Cairo. (Xinhua)

In Madrid, visiting PA Finance Minister Salaam Fayyad met with Industry Minister Jose Montilla and had a conference with journalists and Spanish business representatives. At the conference, Mr. Fayyad denied allegations that vast amounts of financial aid from the late PA President Yasser Arafat's era were missing. He renewed an invitation "for anyone who may know something about this issue to come forward and provide us with that information." He said that he had a high degree of confidence in his reform effort and that, as far as he knew, all Palestinian money had been accounted for. In Madrid, visiting PA Finance Minister Salaam Fayyad met with Industry Minister Jose Montilla and had a conference with journalists and Spanish business representatives. At the conference Mr. Fayyad denied allegations that vast amounts of financial aid from the late PA President Yasser Arafat's era were missing. He renewed an invitation "for anyone who may know something about this issue to come forward and provide us with that information." He said he had a high degree of confidence in his reform effort and that, as far as he knew, all Palestinian money had been accounted for. On the economy, he said the PA faced the challenge of creating 40,000 jobs a year just to keep unemployment stable, and that an estimated 7 of every 10 Palestinian children lived in poverty. Mr. Fayyad added that he wanted to build up the Palestinian private sector to wean his people from foreign aid, but insisted on the need for progress on a settlement with Israel leading to an independent Palestinian State. The Minister was to meet later with Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. (AP)

PA Minister of Housing and Public Works Mohammed Ishtayeh, said the PA would need \$62 million to reconstruct 7,951 Palestinian houses destroyed and other dwellings damaged by the IDF during the intifada. Mr. Ishtayeh said that the PA was seeking to get aid from donor countries.

According to Palestinian housing experts, the majority of houses in question were in the southern Gaza Strip towns of Khan Yunis and Rafah. (Xinhua)

Khadder Adnan, the Islamic Jihad's spokesman in the West Bank, said in a statement that the group had urged all Palestinian militant groups to reconsider the declared truce following violations by Israel. He criticized Israel for the continuous killing and detention of dozens of Palestinians, and the arrest of several Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank. The truce "could never be unilateral and could never be offered to the

occupation for free," Mr. Adnan said. (*Xinhua*)

Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz took office as the 18th Chief of Staff of the IDF as he called soldiers to uphold morality and respect for human life. In a ceremony at Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Jerusalem office, Mr. Halutz paid tribute to what he said was the traditional spirit of the Israeli military. Israeli peace activists, however, protested the appointment of Gen. Halutz outside the IDF's Tel Aviv headquarters, holding placards reading, "Nine dead children, but Halutz sleeps" and "Chief of staff with blood on his wings", referring to the 1-ton bomb that was dropped on a Palestinian home in July 2002 under his watch. (*AP, AFP*)

Outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon warned of the dangers of drawing the curtain on Israel's occupation of Gaza and the likelihood of a renewed uprising without further concessions to the Palestinians. "If there is an Israeli commitment to another move, we will gain another period of quiet. If not, there will be an eruption," Gen. Ya'alon said. "I do not rule out the possibility that the army will return to Gaza at some point. ... If and when we complete the move, we will talk about a fait accompli," he said. Gen. Ya'alon also said that the idea that a Palestinian State by 2008 would lead to stability was "divorced from reality" and "dangerous". (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian who was driving a car on a road north of Qalqilya, Palestinian witnesses and *Israeli Radio* reported. The Palestinian reportedly tried to hit a group of Israeli soldiers who opened fire immediately at the Palestinian's car and killed him. One soldier was seriously wounded. Elsewhere, the IDF arrested three Palestinians at Beituniya town near Ramallah and taken to undisclosed locations, residents in the town said. (*Xinhua*)

Ibrahim Sarahna, a 35-year-old resident of Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, was handed six life sentences at Ofer military court and his wife, Irena Polishchuk, a Ukrainian national, three-and-a-half years behind bars, with a five-year suspended sentence. They were convicted of transporting two teenage bombers to Rishon Letzion, near Tel Aviv, on 22 May 2002 where one of the bombers blew himself up, killing 2 others and injuring around 20. The second bomber backed out at the last minute. Six weeks earlier, Mr. Sarahna had driven another Palestinian teenager to a supermarket in West Jerusalem where she blew herself up, killing 2 and injuring 28. Around the same period, he also brought another bomber to an Israeli checkpoint where he blew himself up, killing a policeman. (*AFP*)

In the Gaza Strip, settlers took over an abandoned beachfront hotel to move in hundreds of people opposed to Israel's withdrawal during the summer.

In the seaside settlement of "Shirat Hayam", just down the beach from the hotel, settlers were also refurbishing a string of abandoned buildings that were vacation villas for Egyptians before Israel captured the Gaza Strip in 1967. (*AP*)

Prime Minister Sharon's office announced plans for a second summit between Prime Minister Sharon and PA President Abbas on 21 June, and that Israeli and Palestinian officials would meet beforehand to discuss the truce and to coordinate Israel's planned pullout from the Gaza Strip in August. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that he and Mr. Sharon's Senior Advisor Dov Weissglas had agreed that Messrs. Sharon and Abbas would meet again during the third week of June. (*Reuters*)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) granted Palestine an observer status during the Assembly's session in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana. NATO PA members also voted in favour of granting Palestine the status of participant during the next session of the Assembly in November 2005. (*IPC*)

2

IDF soldiers arrested eight Islamic Jihad members on suspicion of plotting anti-Israeli attacks, IDF sources said. Five were detained in Idna, near Hebron, as they were reportedly preparing to ambush an IDF position on the edge of the village and planning a suicide bombing. The other three were arrested in Hebron -- two on suspicion of weapons smuggling and a third for helping to plot a double suicide in Jerusalem. *IMEMC* gave the names of at least 15 Palestinians arrested by Israel in and around Hebron. (*AFP, IMEMC*)

IDF soldiers arrested two Islamic Jihad members said to be planning a double suicide bombing in Jerusalem, *Israel Radio* reported. One of them was intercepted at a checkpoint north of Ramallah, the other north of Nablus in the West Bank. (*AP, DPA*)

Orit Stetzer, spokeswoman for the Prison Services, announced the release of 405 Palestinian prisoners from prisons managed by the Prison Services, as well as army detention camps. An IDF [statement](#) later in the day said that Israel had released 398 Palestinian prisoners. The detainees, about 100 of them Hamas members, were released at four drop-off points across the West Bank and at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Many of the released were jailed for such offences as attempted shooting attacks, possession of weapons, placing or attempting to plant bombs and membership in militant organizations declared illegal in Israel. Militants who carried out attacks which resulted in deaths or injuries were not included in the release and, according to the PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs, prisoners suffering from chronic diseases or those arrested before the Oslo Agreements. The release was the second stage agreed at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February 2005. On 21 February, Israel freed 500 prisoners but the release of that group of 400 was suspended after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed five Israelis in Tel Aviv on 25 February. Prime Minister Sharon said earlier that the release was aimed at strengthening the leadership of PA President Abbas. Approving the releases on 29 May, he also said the move was necessary to "strengthen the moderate elements within the PA" and respect commitments made at the summit to release a total of 900 prisoners. (*AFP, DPA, Reuters*)

Hundreds protested in Gaza City, firing guns into the air, to denounce PA Interior and National Security Minister Gen. Nasser Yousef. Most of the demonstrators reportedly belonged to the Palestinian military intelligence or the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The protestors rallied around PA President's Abbas' Gaza home and the local branch of the Interior Ministry to protest Gen. Yousef's decision to make military intelligence answerable to him. The demonstrators called on the Minister to resign in favour of former military intelligence head Mussa Arafat, who left office in April 2005. (*AFP*)

The Israel Lands Administration, a Government agency, published a tender inviting bids for the purchase of 22 plots for the construction of single-family homes in the "Ma'ale Adumim" settlement east of Jerusalem. PA Chief Negotiator Erakat called on the US and the international community to intervene to stop the construction of the new housing units. (*Reuters*)

Dov Weissglas, Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Sharon, speaking at a conference on security at Tel Aviv University, said that after the planned disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank was completed, Israel would begin the evacuation of illegal outposts in the West Bank. "We promised the US Government to get rid of the illegal outposts and we stand behind our obligations," Mr. Weissglas said, adding, "we were hoping to rely on the Council of Settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Yesha) in this matter, but the Council is not helping us and so we must make do ourselves." Dov Weissglas, Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Sharon, speaking at a conference on security at Tel Aviv University, said that after the planned disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank was completed, Israel would begin the evacuation of illegal outposts in the West Bank. "We promised the US Government to get rid of the illegal outposts and we stand behind our obligations," Mr. Weissglas said, adding, "We were hoping to rely on the Council of Settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Yesha) in this matter, but the Council is not helping us and so we must make do ourselves." (*Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

The Popular Committee to Resist the Apartheid Wall in the village of Bal'in (Bil'in), some 12 km west of Ramallah, called on the PA Council of Ministers to convene at the village as a sign of protest against the construction of the wall on its land. (*IPC*)

3

A Palestinian was critically wounded in Ramallah during clashes between Palestinian security forces and militants from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs

Brigades, medics said. The injured man, whose age and identity were not immediately known, was said to be an off-duty member of the security forces who got into a dispute with the militants after they had allegedly insulted a female member of his family. He then called the security forces who surrounded a building in which the militants were holed up, and in the ensuing confrontation was shot and badly hurt. (AFP)

Clashes broke out between IDF forces and hundreds of Palestinian, Israeli and international activists during a demonstration against the wall in the village of Bal'in (Bil'in), some 12 km west of Ramallah. PA Minister Ahmed Majdalani and other Arab MKs also took part in the protest. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF confirmed that soldiers operated "the Screamer", a small white box attached to a jeep that transmitted high-pitched sound waves, to disperse a crowd demonstrating against the separation wall in the West Bank village of Bal'in (Bil'in). The crowd rioted and began to throw rocks at soldiers after they were prevented from reaching the construction site. One soldier lost an eye after being hit by a stone. Located about a quarter mile from the demonstration, the jeep emitted several bursts of sounds, about one minute in length each time. Although the sound was not loud, it caused people to cover their ears and grab their heads in discomfort. Soldiers also used other means to disperse the crowd, including clubs and stun grenades. (AP, The Jerusalem Post)

The IDF weekly "Bamahane" reported that the IDF had proposed to use a 100-ton trench-digging machine, made by the US company Trencor Inc., to expose the smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Trencor's head of international sales, Don Sharp, said that Israel had paid \$1.4 million for one of its top-of-the-line trench diggers. The weekly said only that the machine had arrived disassembled from Texas and was being put together, to be operational "in the coming weeks". (AP)

PA President Abbas, speaking to reporters shortly after his return from Jordan, where he had gone for medical treatment, said he planned to create the post of Vice-President in the PA. (AFP)

A Ma'ariv poll indicated that support in Israel for the pullout from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements stood at 50 per cent, compared to 59 per cent two weeks earlier. (AP)

During three days of talks in the Netherlands, some 40 Israeli and Palestinian mayors discussed plans to share scarce water resources and jointly develop tourism. The mayors said that they hoped working together would foster an atmosphere of trust and help to move peace efforts as Israel prepared to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. (AP)

The Israeli Prime Minister's Office [announced](#) that the summit between Mr. Sharon and PA President Abbas later in June would take place in Jerusalem. (AFP)

4

A Palestinian source said that IDF soldiers had ambushed and detained Samir Burnat, a leading member of the Bal'in village anti-wall committee. (IMEMC)

PA President Abbas issued a [decree](#) postponing parliamentary elections owing to technical reasons. Hamas denounced the move, saying the delay harmed the Palestinian national interest, but said that it would continue to honour a ceasefire with Israel. "This decision is unacceptable and is opposed to what the Palestinian factions agreed on in the Cairo dialogue," a Hamas statement said. No new date was set for the elections, originally scheduled for 17 July, although it seemed unlikely to take place before Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza. Mr. Abbas said that an election date would be set after talks with Palestinian lawmakers and consultations with political groups, including Hamas. "Postponement was necessary to enable ourselves to finalize the legal measures and consultations between factions," he told *Palestinian TV*, adding, "time is short." (AFP, AP, Los Angeles Times)

In the Gaza Strip, about 40 masked Palestinian gunmen blocked traffic at the Rafah crossing with Egypt, searching for cars with diplomatic license plates. Shaker Abu Eida, the Palestinian representative in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, was prevented from crossing the border and his car was searched. He was later released, but the militants reportedly refused to give him his passport. The gunmen said they were protesting age restrictions that prevented them from being hired as policemen. The Palestinians plan to hire 5,000 policemen in Gaza as part of the PA reform efforts and to prepare for Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza. However, the jobs are open only to men between the ages of 18 and 22. The protesters were in their late 20s and early 30s and said that they were members of the Fatah Hawks, a small militia affiliated with Fatah. (AP, Reuters, UPI)

After a meeting of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, PA President Abbas [announced](#) the creation of a committee to establish a place for housing all the personal effects of the late PA President Yasser Arafat. The committee will be headed by presidential secretary Tayed Abdelrahim and will include Nasser Al-Kidwa, Rafieeq Al-Husseini, Sami Musalm and Ramzi Khouri, as committee secretary. (AFP, Wafa)

A square on El Salvador's Jerusalem Avenue was named after Yasser Arafat and featured a bust of the Palestinian leader. Israel's ambassador in El Salvador, Jonathan Peled, told *La Prensa Grafica* that the tribute the capital's Palestinian community and municipal government were paying the late PA President was "obviously meant to hurt and insult the Israeli people". The plaza opened on 25 May with a ceremony attended by legislators from the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), local authorities and dozens of people of Palestinian descent. El Salvador and Costa Rica are the only nations in the world that keep embassies in Jerusalem. (EFE)

5

Firing into the air, Palestinian gunmen briefly took over three government buildings in Nablus demanding jobs in the security services. They ordered employees in the three buildings to leave, and disappeared before police arrived. One officer was injured in the leg by a stray bullet. (AP)

PA Police Chief Alaa Hosni said at a Gaza news conference that three men had been arrested on suspicion of killing Ali Farraj, a prominent Fatah member, and his brother Hussam in Nablus two days earlier, while a fourth suspect had escaped to Israel. He said that Palestinian authorities were in contact with Israeli counterparts to arrange the handover of the fugitive. A group of gunmen in a fuel tanker truck stopped the car Mr. Farraj was driving in the village of Qabalan as he and his brother were heading to a mosque in southern Nablus. Authorities said the gunmen had opened fire, killing Mr. Farraj, 45, instantly. His brother, 36, later died of his wounds. Palestinian sources said that the four suspects, all brothers, might have been avenging the 1991 killing of their father, who had been accused of spying for Israel during the first intifada in 1987-1992. Yousef Harb, a Fatah spokesman in Nablus, said that the Farraj family have refused to bury the bodies until the assailants have been tried. (AP, UPI)

Palestinian factions marked the 38th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem, by insisting that the territories be liberated. (UPI)

The Amman-based Palestine National Council, the Palestinian "parliament-in-exile", issued a statement on this day, the anniversary of the start of the 1967 "Six-Day War". It stated that the refugees must be allowed to return under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and urged the international community to "bear its responsibilities and assume its role in achieving the aspired peace by pressuring the Israeli Government to implement the accords" reached with the Palestinians. (UPI)

Israel's Supreme Court rejected a petition submitted by 24 Palestinian villages to freeze construction on a portion of the separation wall, the Defence Ministry said in a [posting](#) on its website. The villages asked the Court to issue an interim injunction to suspend construction between Har Adar and Beit Surik, west of Jerusalem, and to reject part of the land seizure order for the construction of the barrier. The petitioners said that the new route expropriated 200 dunums (50 acres, 1 dunum = 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of agricultural land and separated the villagers from an additional 1,000 dunums (250 acres) to be located on the Israeli side of the barrier. (AP)

A number of families from four Israeli settlements in the northern West Bank have signed a petition to apply for political asylum in the PA in order to remain in their homes following Israel's planned evacuation of those settlements. "If the State of Israel doesn't want us, we don't want it," Drori Stuan, a 28-year-old resident of the "Kadim" settlement, and whose family was one of the founders of the secular settlement that was set up in 1983, said. He added: "We are people who intend to carry on living in Samaria under Palestinian rule and not under Israeli rule ... There are Jews everywhere in the world: in Syria, in Iraq, in Iran, in Pakistan, so we want to be Jews under Palestinian sovereignty. We are not afraid and I believe it will be good for us and we will live safely, like Jews in other parts of the world." (AFP, *Yediot Aharonot*)

Speaking at a seminar on the settlements organized by the Ben-Gurion University, Talia Sasson, the author of a comprehensive report on the West Bank settlement outposts, said: "Since the report was submitted, nothing has happened. It was well publicized, and that's good, but everything is continuing. Perhaps the Housing Ministry has closed a few taps, but there has been no operative decision and construction continues in the outposts." A *Ha'aretz* investigation confirmed Ms. Sasson's statement that outpost construction has continued as usual; the only change it found was a slight improvement in the defence establishment's gathering of information about such construction. (AFP, *Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Qureia held a two-hour meeting with UN Middle East Envoy Alvaro de Soto in the Palestinian Council of Ministers building in Ramallah. (IPC)

Officials and diplomats quoted by Israeli newspapers said that the US administration was showing signs of easing its approach to Hamas, in response to the group's rising political clout in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and appeals for flexibility from European allies. (*Ha'aretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Two Greek newspapers published extracts from a letter sent by Irineos I, former Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, dismissed over his alleged involvement in a land-sale scandal, to Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis dated 31 May, in which he claimed that there had been a "plot" by some prelates in the Patriarchate. The temporary replacement for Irineos, Metropolitan Petra Cornelios, took up his duties on 30 May after being unanimously elected by church leaders in Jerusalem. (AFP)

6

Israeli soldiers broke up a demonstration by Palestinian villagers and some 15 foreign activists protesting against Israel's West Bank separation barrier at Marda village, north of Nablus. The IDF fired tear gas as demonstrators marched towards land being bulldozed for the sector of the barrier being built around the "Ariel" settlement. Around 700 olive trees were uprooted from Marda last week to make way for the separation barrier. (AFP)

Israeli police stormed East Jerusalem's Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound after hundreds of Palestinians threw stones at a group of visitors, as Israel marked "Jerusalem Day", in commemoration of its capture of the city in June 1967. "A small Jewish group of about 10 to 15 people started a tour.

Hundreds of young Palestinians came out of the mosque and started throwing stones at the Jewish group," said a police spokesman. Police accompanied two groups of Jewish worshippers to the area at dawn, witnesses said, and intervened when Palestinians threw stones at the second group visiting a site near the mosque. Police used stun grenades to disperse the crowd. Two people were injured in the incident. PA President Abbas described the police action as a "most dangerous violation" of Palestinian Holy Places. (AFP, *Reuters*, *UPI*)

The IDF might temporarily seize Palestinian-ruled areas in the Gaza Strip if militants launched attacks during the planned withdrawal in August, Defence Minister Mofaz said, adding that he had discussed the issue with senior PA officials. (*Reuters*)

Egypt's presidential spokesman Suleiman Awad said that Israel was dragging its feet instead of handing over three West Bank cities to PA security control, as agreed in Sharm el-Sheikh in February. "There is dawdling in the handover of the rest of the five Palestinian cities to the Palestinian side," Mr. Awad told reporters after talks between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah in Sharm el-Sheikh. He also said that Israeli demands that PA President Abbas dismantle Palestinian factions were "not realistic and not practical". (*Reuters*)

Hamas was willing to negotiate a new date for parliamentary elections provided they took place before the end of the year, Hassan Yousef, the West Bank leader of the group said, but stressed that PA President Abbas had not consulted Hamas before deciding to delay the vote. Mr. Yousef met with Sakher Habash, a Fatah representative, and the two decided to form a committee that would propose a new date. (AP)

The PA was recruiting thousands of police officers in the Gaza Strip to help prevent attacks on settlers and soldiers during Israel's planned pullout from the area, security officials said. (AP)

The Israeli Government approved a 280-million-shekel (\$64 million) plan aimed at boosting Jerusalem's Jewish population and economy. Under the plan, young couples who would want to buy an apartment in the city would receive 20,000 shekels (\$4,545) and students who would agree to live in Jerusalem for three years after finishing college would receive grants valued at 80 per cent of their tuition. (*Ha'aretz*)

James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, began a visit to Israel. During the trip, Mr. Wolfensohn will meet with Vice Premier Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz. The envoy will then travel to the Occupied Palestinian Territory for talks with PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Qureia. (AP)

Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a [statement](#) that it "regarded with understanding" the decision by PA President Abbas to postpone the PLC elections. ([www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru))

7

Hamas said it had fired five Qassam rockets at the Israeli town of Sderot, in retaliation for an Israeli police raid on the Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound on 6 June. Israeli sources confirmed the attack and said that a woman and her two children had been hospitalized. (UPI)

Four Qassam rockets hit open areas near four communities in the western Negev, *Israel Radio* reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

Maraweh Ihmil, age 25, head of the Islamic Jihad military wing in Jenin, was killed in a lengthy gun battle that ensued when IDF troops entered the town of Qabatiya, near Jenin, witnesses said. Another gunman was killed, and five Palestinians were wounded. (AP)

Three workers – one Chinese and two Palestinians – were killed and five other Palestinian workers wounded in a mortar shelling on greenhouses in the Gaza Strip settlement of "Ganei Tal". The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, saying that it was retaliating for Maraweh Ihmil's death. (*Ha'aretz*)

Two Palestinians, including an AFP photographer, were lightly injured when Israeli soldiers used tear gas and stun grenades to break up a protest against Israel's separation wall near Hebron. (AFP)

The IDF said that Palestinians had opened fire at the following Israeli targets: an army post west of Tulkarm, an Israeli force guarding the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, an army post guarding the "Gadid" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, an army post guarding the



“Kadim” settlement, south-east of Jenin, an army post at the “Karnei-Netzarim junction” in the northern Gaza Strip, and an army post near the “Rafiah Yam” settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported in these incidents. Also, Palestinians fired two anti-tank missiles at an army post north of the “Kissufim” crossing between the southern Gaza Strip and Israel and another at an army post along the border with Egypt near Rafah. No injuries or damage were reported. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Israeli troops shot and killed a man who had entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt after climbing over the border fence. IDF officials said that they believed the man was an Egyptian involved in weapons smuggling but no weapons had been found on his body. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israeli Government offered the PA to build a railway linking the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The rail link would enable safe passage between the two areas after the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Housing Ministry had allocated at least 70 million shekels (\$16 million) to expand 82 unauthorized settlement outposts in the West Bank during two Likud Prime Ministerial terms, according to details from the former prosecutor Talia Sasson's report obtained by *Ha'aretz*. The sums did not include tens of millions of shekels allocated by the Defense Ministry, the Jewish Agency, and donors from Israel and abroad, stated the report. (*Ha'aretz*)

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw [met](http://www.mfa.gov.il) with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and reiterated that Hamas was a terror organization, and that the UK would have no dealings with its leaders unless they wholly renounced violence and the charter calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. (*The Jerusalem Post*, [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il))

The Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement James Wolfensohn and US Security Coordinator Lt.-Gen. William Ward met with Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres and other Government and security officials. Mr. Wolfensohn said that he would meet with donor countries in the next few days and propose water, sewage and road projects for the Gaza Strip. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors [approved](http://www.worldbank.org) a \$20 million project “to develop a sustainable institutional structure of the water and wastewater sector in the Gaza Strip by supporting the functional establishment of a Coastal Water Utility.” ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org))

8

The IDF said that Palestinians had opened fire at an Israeli force near Nablus. In three other separate incidents, Palestinian gunmen opened fire at army posts along the border with Egypt. No injuries or damage were reported in those incidents. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

An Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a group of Hamas militants preparing to fire rockets in the southern Gaza Strip. Witnesses said that the militants had escaped the attack unharmed. The IDF said that the air force had attacked a mortar shell launcher after a shell had been fired towards Israel.

The aircraft also attacked a vehicle carrying other launchers, but there were no occupants in the vehicle. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*, *Reuters*)

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw met with PA President Abbas, Prime Minister Qureia and Foreign Minister Al-Kidwa in Ramallah. “We will do everything we can ... to back the joint efforts of the PA and the Israeli Government to make a success out of this disengagement. ... It is crucial to the people in Gaza and to the future of the whole area,” Mr. Straw told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Qureia. (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas urged Israel to sanction the reopening of the Gaza International Airport and the safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip based on the [Safe Passage Protocol](#) of 5 October 1999. The appeal was made in talks with James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, according to PA Civil Affairs Minister Mohammed Dahlan, who was also present during the meeting. (*AFP*)

Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz and PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef reached a deal to coordinate security steps in connection with Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Mr. Yousef's spokesman, Tawfiq Abu-Khoussa, said, “The two ministers agreed to coordinate the security side of the withdrawal at the ministerial level and on the level of security planning.” He said that teams from both sides would meet the following week and “would tackle every detail of the withdrawal plan.” The two sides also discussed the issue of transferring security control in Palestinian cities in the West Bank, including a specific timeline for the handover to the Palestinians. (*Reuters*, *Xinhua*)

A poll commissioned by *Israel Radio* showed that Israelis' support for the disengagement plan had declined from 60 per cent a year ago to 50 per cent. (*Ha'aretz*)

A report recently released by the Palestinian National Information Centre of the State Information Service indicated that Israeli forces had killed 38 Palestinians, wounded 411 and arrested 988 since the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February. The report also stated that Israeli forces had carried out 1,967 incursions into Palestinian population centres and had set up 1,306 mobile checkpoints and roadblocks during the period between 8 February and 6 June 2005. (*International Press Centre*)

The [Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics](#) reported that Israel had built almost twice as many settler homes in the first quarter of 2005 as in the same period in 2004. Construction work began on 564 homes in settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the first three months of 2005, comprising an 83 per cent increase from the 308 homes begun in the same period a year earlier. At the same time, construction of new homes in Israel fell 6 per cent from the first quarter of 2004, the bureau said. (*Ha'aretz*, *Reuters*)

9

Dozens of Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun clashed with Palestinian militants trying to launch homemade rockets at Sderot in Israel, according to a PA Interior Ministry statement. The residents said that the militants had left the area as soon as members of the Palestinian security services had arrived. (*DPA*, *Xinhua*)

Israeli troops made a brief incursion into the Gaza Strip overnight. Eight tanks and armoured vehicles entered the Palestinian area on a 300-metre stretch shortly after the settlement of “Netzarim” was hit by mortar fire. In a separate incident, an explosion rocked a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. There were no immediate reports of injuries. The IDF denied involvement and said that the blast had apparently been an accident. (*AFP*, *AP*, *BBC*)

Israel arrested eleven Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank. A statement from the group said that Israeli troops made the arrests in Araba, south of Jenin, and in Baka Sharqiya, near Tulkarm. Elsewhere, four Palestinians were injured in clashes between Israeli troops and demonstrators protesting the construction of the wall in the West Bank city of Salfit. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas met with leaders of militant groups and political factions in the Gaza Strip to resolve political disputes such as electoral reform and upholding the ceasefire with Israel. Mr. Abbas said that keeping the ceasefire with Israel was in the interest of all parties concerned. He also criticized an Israeli air strike near the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis the previous day wherein four Hamas followers had escaped unharmed seconds before a rocket slammed onto their vehicle. Mr. Abbas described the air strike as “an unjustified operation” that “will destroy the truce” but at the same time urged the militants to halt attacks, even if they were responding to Israeli truce violations. Militant leaders told Mr. Abbas they

would continue to respect the ceasefire with Israeli, but would retaliate to any Israeli attacks. They also agreed on a "high national commission" that would allow them to "coordinate and consult" with the Palestinian leadership over the Israeli withdrawal, giving the groups formal standing in the operation. (AFP, BBC News, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

Hamas leader Saeed Sayam said, "Hamas' involvement in Palestinian political life does not mean it will abandon weapons and arms. Our participation in the political life is to aid and support the armed wing of the movement and not to dismantle it." (DPA)

The Israeli High Court of Justice upheld the disengagement plan from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, removing a major legal obstacle to the pullout. The 11-judge panel headed by Chief Justice Aharon Barak rejected 12 petitions by opponents to the withdrawal, ruling that the pullout did not violate the settlers' human rights. The panel determined that "Judea and Samaria" [West Bank] and the Gaza area are lands seized during warfare, and are not part of Israel." The justices ruled that the disengagement plan as presently envisaged was legal and that its implementation posed no constitutional problems. Settler leaders dismissed the ruling as irrelevant, vowing to resist the evacuation. (AP, BBC News, Ha'aretz)

Avi Dichter, former head of the Shin Bet security service said that he supported the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and did not believe that it would worsen Israel's security situation. He disagreed with former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon's prediction that the disengagement would lead to a renewal of violence in the West Bank. He objected to defining the disengagement as a "flight." Mr. Dichter attributed the militant groups' willingness to agree to halt violence to the heavy military pressure applied by Israel, and particularly the assassination of their leaders. He also believed that the threat of Qassam launches would not be any greater after the IDF left Gaza, and that in fact, Israel would have greater freedom for military action if needed, because once the settlements and the IDF were out of Gaza, the number of Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip would be much smaller. (Ha'aretz)

PA Minister for Civilian Affairs Mohammad Dahlan said that Israel was making it difficult to coordinate the planned disengagement. Addressing the Foreign Press Association in Ramallah, Mr. Dahlan said they had held 10 meetings with the Israelis "without receiving any information." He said that Israel had given them a copy of the map that Chairman Yasser Arafat had signed in Cairo with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin years earlier. (UPI)

Several Palestinians were injured and 12 others were arrested, including foreign activists, when IDF soldiers hurled tear gas canisters at an anti-wall rally in Salfit, witnesses said. The activists included two Israelis and one American. In another incident the IDF arrested four Palestinians in the town of Arraba, south of Jenin. Witnesses said that Ahmed Lahlouh, age 23, Moustafa Shebani, age 22, Tareq Mghiar, age 22, and Rami Eridi, age 22, were taken to an unknown location. In Tulkarm, Israeli troops arrested four Palestinians after a large-scale house search operation.

Witnesses said that those arrested were Abed Wajeh, age 19, Mohammed Ajaj, age 30, Hammam Nasr Allah and Mohammad Nasr Allah. (Wafa) Two of nine Islamic Jihad members jailed by the PA in connection with a suicide bombing in Israel on 25 February 2005 were freed from a Jericho prison, security sources said. The PA was also expected to release two more on 11 June based on an agreement that they remain within Jericho, the sources said. Asked about the prisoner release, Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mark Regev said: "The Palestinian Authority's living up to its commitment to fight terrorism is a prerequisite for moving forward on any sort of political dialogue." In Gaza, Islamic Jihad leader Khaled al-Batsh said that PA President Abbas had agreed to release the nine prisoners on condition that they remained in Jericho. (Reuters, Ha'aretz)

## 10

In the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinians protested against the alleged desecration of the Koran at a prison in northern Israel. The protestors held Korans and demanded Israel put the alleged perpetrators on trial and have them apologize. Earlier that week Islamic Jihad had shown pictures of torn Korans, which they said had been ripped by Israeli soldiers inside the Megiddo jail in northern Israel. Israel rejected the charges as a fabrication by the prisoners. (AP)

Yediot Ahronot reported that senior Israeli officials had submitted a secret document to Prime Minister Sharon recommending the release of jailed Palestinian legislator Marwan Barghouti. According to the newspaper, the document argued that Mr. Barghouti's release would benefit Israel because Mr. Barghouti would boost reform efforts in Fatah, as he was seen as a leader by many young, pro-reform activists. Mr. Sharon's office confirmed receiving the document, but said that Mr. Barghouti's release was out of the question. (DPA)

Fayez Ayyad, a 30-year-old Palestinian, died of wounds he sustained eight days ago, Palestinian medical sources at Shifa Hospital in Gaza said. Mr. Fayez died at an Israeli hospital, where he had received medical treatment. Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in Jerusalem, preventing hundreds of them from reaching the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Friday's prayers. Only those above 40 years of age were allowed to enter the Old City for prayers. (Wafa)

## 11

PA Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said that it was "inconceivable to disarm factions ... as long as the occupation continues." He stressed that "holding and using arms must be reorganized, and it should not be used for personal purposes or to violate law, order and discipline." "The refusal of the Palestinian Authority to disarm the organizations is tantamount to planting a cluster bomb in the dialogue process," said Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. (AP, Reuters, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas called for an amendment to the Basic Law so that a PA president and vice-president would be elected together in the next presidential election. (Xinhua)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told Voice of Palestine radio that a series of meetings would be held that week between Israeli and Palestinian officials to prepare for the summit between PA President Abbas and Israel's Prime Minister Sharon on 21 June. (Xinhua)

The PA Ministry of the Interior and the General Security Service set up a security planning team to prepare for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. "The security planning team will set the transitional plans to deal with the Israeli pullout," the Ministry said in a statement. It will be headed by Brigadier General Jamal Abu Zayed. (IPC, Reuters)

Some 40 gunmen from various militant groups attacked a PA security headquarters in Gaza City, starting a shootout with PA security officers. No one was injured, witnesses and security officials said. Soon after the fighting stopped, shots were fired near the house of Rashid Abu Shbak, the Head of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service. No injuries were reported in that shooting either. (AP, AFP, Xinhua)

## 12

Leaders of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad threatened to withdraw from the ceasefire following a meeting of 13 Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip. "We are going to meet again within two days in order to discuss our final stand," said Mohammed al-Hindi, an Islamic Jihad leader. "It looks like Israel will continue in this aggression and we cannot accept that anymore." (AP)

The Islamic Jihad said that four of its members held in a PA prison in Jericho in connection with a bombing in a Tel Aviv night club in February had been released, and expected more to be freed later. Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Ze'ev Boim said that the Government "must view this with gravity ... If those who were involved with terrorism ... are indeed being released, I would suggest that the Prime Minister's circle weigh if the meeting between the Prime Minister and Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] should be held as scheduled." (UPI)

The IDF imposed a full closure on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank for the duration of the holiday of Shavuot. (IPC, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas decided to form a commission to combat corruption in the PA institutions. The commission would be headed by PLC member Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja, and would have the authority to question any PA official about illegal profiteering and allegations of corruption. (IPC)

## 13

A Hamas militant was seriously injured when a bomb he was rigging exploded prematurely in the Shati (Beach) refugee camp in the Gaza Strip,

witnesses and medical sources said. (AFP)

Gunmen opened fire at IDF troops near the southern Gaza Strip settlement of "Neve Dekalim" and near the Rafah border crossing. A Qassam rocket landed in the north Gaza Strip "Nissanit" settlement. No injuries were reported. (Ha'aretz)

Palestinians opened fire on an IDF post near Tulkarm in the West Bank. No injuries were reported. (www.idf.il)

PA officials said that Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit and Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman were scheduled to visit Ramallah this week.

During their tour, Mr. Abul Gheit and Mr. Suleiman would also visit Israel. The sources said that the Egyptian officials' visit was aimed at bridging the gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian sides over the coordination of the Gaza Strip pullout. (Xinhua)

Hundreds of Palestinians marched in Gaza City from the International Committee of the Red Cross headquarters to the Palestinian parliament building, stopping on the way outside the houses of Palestinian prisoners. The protesters demanded the release of prisoners in Israel and the punishment of wardens in the Megiddo prison who allegedly had torn a copy of the Koran the previous week. A spokesman for the Israeli Prison Service, Ofer Lefler, reiterated that no Koran had been desecrated. Abu Nasser, a spokesman for the Brigades of Bahaeddine Said, a militant group affiliated with Fatah, urged international human rights groups to intervene to secure the release of the Palestinian prisoners and stop Israel from committing human rights violations. (UPI)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was heading to the Middle East ahead of talks with Group of Eight foreign ministers, the State Department said. The seven-day trip began on 17 June and would include stops in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia before she headed to Brussels and London, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters, adding, "She is going to talk about the Gaza withdrawal both with the Israelis as well as the Palestinian Authority". (AP, DPA, UPI)

Foreign ministers of over 130 developing countries endorsed in Doha the final statement and the agenda of the second G-77 plus China summit due to start on 15 June, the official Qatar News Agency reported. Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN, Naser Abdel-Aziz Al-Nasir, said that the statement, among other things, called for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. (Xinhua)

Some 13 Palestinian factions, including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, met in Gaza. The Higher Follow-up Committee of Palestinian national and Islamic factions issued a statement, saying, "A one-sided truce will not be accepted and cannot continue. We hold the Zionist enemy completely responsible for the deterioration of the truce." The groups said that they would continue to consult with one another to determine an "appropriate response to the ongoing aggression". PA Foreign Minister Nasser al-Kidwa said that the PA expected the factions to honour the agreement. "We made our positions clear and said that compliance will be full and this is not a tactical matter," Mr. Al-Kidwa said on Israel TV. "This is something that we have to adhere to." (AP, Xinhua)

14

Bilal Hasna, age 18, a Hamas member seriously wounded the previous day by a bomb he was rigging, died from his injuries. (AFP)

The IDF said that Palestinian gunmen had opened fire at the following Israeli targets: an army force north-west of Jenin, an army post along the border with Egypt near Rafah, and an army post guarding the "Ganei Tal" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Also, Palestinians fired a mortar shell at a settlement in the northern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported in these incidents. (www.idf.il)

A 17-year-old Palestinian in the Dura village, south-west of Hebron, was injured by rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli soldiers who had stormed the village. (IPC, WAFA)

An IDF spokesman announced that the general closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that had been in place since 12 June for the Shavuot Holiday, had been lifted as of midnight of 13 June. "Following the lifting of the closure, Palestinian workers and merchants are permitted to enter and work in Israel from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and to enter and work in the Erez Industrial Zone", the statement also said. The IDF said that Palestinians had fired grenades on Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip the previous day, as well as three mortar shells and a Qassam rocket at Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip during the holiday. No one had been injured and no damage had been caused in those incidents, a spokesman said. (AFP, DPA, IMRA)

PA Prime Minister Qureia, speaking at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting, said: "We are calling on our brothers in the security services to take the necessary measures, to deter those who are carrying out attacks at will, against our citizens. If this [the security chaos] continues, the government will suspend its functions." Earlier in the day, a father and son were shot dead in Gaza City by two masked gunmen in what security sources believe was a family dispute. (AFP)

The joint Israeli-Palestinian committee for coordinating Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was to meet for the first time, the IDF and public radios reported, without specifying where the talks would be held. IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky was to meet with the PA Deputy Interior Minister Jamal Abu Zeid to discuss the implementation of the withdrawal plan and the expected firing by Palestinian militants at the Israeli forces carrying out the evacuation. Members of Israel's Internal Security Service would also attend the meeting. The schedule of meetings was laid out last week at the talks between Defence Minister Mofaz and PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousuf. The joint Israeli-Palestinian committee for coordinating Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was to meet for the first time, the IDF and public radios reported, without specifying where the talks would be held. IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky was to meet with the PA Deputy Interior Minister Jamal Abu Zeid to discuss the implementation of the withdrawal plan and the expected firing by Palestinian militants at the Israeli forces carrying out the evacuation. Members of Israel's Internal Security Service would also attend the meeting. The schedule of meetings was laid out last week at the talks between Defence Minister Mofaz and PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousuf. (AFP)

IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz said that Palestinian attacks on Israeli troops trying to evacuate Gaza Strip settlements this summer could cause a temporary halt to the pullout, but would not force it to be cancelled. He added that the delicate job of having unarmed troops forcibly evacuate resistant settlers while trying to defend against Palestinian fire would be complex and dangerous. (AP)

PA Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said that the forthcoming summit between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon would focus on the implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh understanding and to reach a clear and detailed understanding regarding the disengagement plan.

Speaking at a press briefing in Ramallah, he also said that the PA would not promise to disarm Palestinian resistance organizations as long as the occupation continued. "My position is based on international law and a deep understanding of the responsibilities according to the Road Map, and I will not retract my words," he said. (www.ipc.gov.ps)

The IDF issued a [statement](#) on improvements and technological enhancements at the security crossings and roadblocks in the West Bank. The IDF said that it had removed over half of the security crossings and roadblocks in the West Bank over the past two years: in January 2004, there had been 25 security crossings throughout the West Bank, both temporary and permanent, and including “encirclement crossings and seam zone crossings”. The IDF had removed 13 of these crossings and 87 roadblocks, so that at the moment there were 12 security crossings and 66 roadblocks, and there was no “curfew or encirclement on any Palestinian city”. ([www.idf.il](#))

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, speaking at a security symposium in Berlin, said, “There is need for a strong, intensive engagement [in the Middle East peace process]. The Europeans are doing so and I wish that the Americans would do so too.” He stressed the current rare opportunity for a solution to the conflict, as the two sides had never before been “so close to one another”, adding, “if the window closed, the chance would be gone for ever”. Speaking of the NATO engagement in Middle East, Mr. Fischer said, “I think there is little value in NATO’s involvement in Iraq, but the value of the role of NATO in the Middle East is relatively high”. As for possible German troops’ dispatch to the Middle East following a hypothetical NATO engagement, Mr. Fischer said that Germany must be very cautious in its handling of “the sensitive issue”. (*Xinhua*)

15

The IDF said that Palestinian gunmen had opened fire at its force near the “Netzer Hazani” settlement and at an army post near the “Neve Dekalim” settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage w The IDF said Palestinian gunmen had opened fire at its force near the “Netzer Hazani” settlement and at an army post near the “Neve Dekalim” settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported. ([www.idf.il](#))

Israeli forces entered Yatta, south of Hebron and exploded a number of caves. A group of settlers attacked Palestinian homes and properties in the old part of the city. Sources said that Israeli troops conducted searches in old and abandoned houses in the area as well as olive groves, using stun grenades, tear gas canisters and flare grenades. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces arrested eight Palestinians, including four teenagers, suspected of planning suicide bombings in Israel, according to security officials. The suspects were members of Fatah and were based in Nablus. Four of them were under 18, including two children of 15 years of age. (*AP*)

PA Interior Ministry spokesman Tawfiq Abu Khousa said that Israel had agreed in principle to transfer Jenin to Palestinian control soon to ensure calm in the area during Israel’s planned pullout from four nearby settlements. The handover was discussed at the first meeting of an Israeli-Palestinian committee to coordinate Israel’s planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, held in Tel Aviv on 14 June, represented by IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky and PA Deputy Interior Minister Jamal Abu Zeid. (*AP, Reuters*)

PA Prime Minister Qureia demanded that the Palestinian security forces bring an end to the chaos and lawlessness in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. “It is up to the Palestinian security forces to shoulder their responsibilities, and if this Government is incapable of putting an end to the chaos, it must resign and allow another one to take its place. ... I declare here, in front of my people, there is no more room for chaos and killing, and all the weapons must disappear from the streets,” Mr. Qureia said at a graduation ceremony at Al-Najah University in Nablus. (*AP*)

Israeli and Palestinian security officials met at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint in the Gaza Strip to discuss recent attacks by militants on the “Gush Katif” settlements, according to *Israeli Radio*. Israel’s Brig. Gen. Aviv Kochavi and other senior officers met with PA security officials. IDF officials described the meeting as “positive.” (*Ha’aretz*)

Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman met with PA Security Adviser Jibril Rajoub and discussed the truce between Israel and the Palestinians and the delayed implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreements. Mr. Rajoub said that he had told Mr. Suleiman the Palestinians wanted to ensure Israel’s full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which would include giving Palestinians control over the airport and seaports, and agree to incorporate the pullout in the [Road Map](#). Also, Mr. Suleiman was to meet with Prime Minister Sharon during the day and confirm the number of Egyptian guards that would be sent to the Egypt-Gaza border to prevent weapons smuggling in the aftermath of Israel’s withdrawal. The 40 Egyptian officers, meanwhile, had already been sent to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and were helping to reform Palestinian security services. According to senior officials, Cairo had been promised that it would be given 48-hours notice of any Israeli attack, allowing its own force to retreat in time. (*AP, The Financial Times*)

Dutch Ambassador to Israel Bob Heinisch said that his country could buy greenhouses in the 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip Israel planned to evacuate. “The odds are low but we’re working hard on the issue because it’s important ... to make sure the pullout is a success,” Mr. Heinisch said. (*Ynet*)

A [poll](#) conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research showed that Fatah would win 44 per cent of the seats and Hamas and Islamic Jihad would win 33 per cent in the upcoming Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections. The survey also showed support for Hamas surging to 30 per cent, compared with 25 per cent in March and 18 per cent in December. Also, 60 per cent of the respondents said that they were satisfied with PA President Abbas’ performance since his election and 35 per cent said that they were not satisfied. The poll was conducted among 1,320 Palestinians in 120 locations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and had a 3 per cent margin of error. (*The Jerusalem Post*, [www.pcpsr.org](#))

President Bush [suspended](#) the transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem for an additional six months. ([www.whitehouse.gov](#))

16

IDF soldiers arrested three Islamic Jihad members in a village near Ramallah. Another member of the group was seized at a roadblock east of the town. The soldiers said that Palestinians had fired two mortar shells at settlements in the northern and southern Gaza Strip overnight, but had caused no injuries or damage. (*Ha’aretz*)

Palestinian militants fired two Qassam rockets from Beit Lahia at the Israeli town of Sderot, the IDF reported. No injuries had been reported, but a truck had been damaged, the army spokesman said. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it came in retaliation for the arrest of a senior Islamic Jihad member near Jenin on the same day. In another incident, militants fired at an army post securing the settlement of “Netzarim”, south of Gaza City. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Ha’aretz, UPI*)

Palestinian witnesses said that Israeli settlers had released wild boars which attacked the Hawwara town of Nablus. Witnesses said that the wild pigs had also attacked neighbouring villages and had destroyed crops and agricultural farms. Mansour Damed, Mayor of Hawwara, warned against the gravity of the problem, describing that the pigs were scattered in the villages of Bourin, Madma Enbos and Jamma’in. (*Wafa*)

The Israeli Foreign Ministry protested recent EU contacts with Hamas, saying that it was pressing EU officials to respect their official designation of Hamas as a terrorist group. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mark Regev said, “We believe Europeans should be strengthening moderate Palestinians and not appeasing the extremists.” Israel’s protest came as the EU informed the US Administration of an evolution in its contacts with Hamas. The EU decision allowed contacts with Hamas representatives who were running in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. In Brussels,



EU Spokesperson Elena Peresso said that the EU had reached no collective decision on whether to change its policy towards Hamas. (AP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

A NATO delegation visited Ramallah to meet with PA officials. The visit was aimed at discussing a possible role for NATO to monitor a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians. Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer had said an imminent involvement of the organization in the region was unlikely unless requested by both sides. (www.ipc.gov.ps)

Prime Minister Sharon said that the disengagement plan was meant not to weaken Zionism, but to strengthen areas whose strategic importance was high, such as the Galilee, the Negev and Jerusalem. (Ha'aretz)

In speeches made at two venues in Israel, Prime Minister Sharon reaffirmed that Israel would pull out of the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank on schedule despite stiff opposition from settlers. He told the audience at a college in northern Israel and at a high-tech conference in Tel Aviv the pullout was to begin in mid-August. (AP)

Lt.-Gen. William Ward, US Security Coordinator in the Middle East, visited Jericho where he met with PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef. Gen. Ward praised Israel and the PA for making joint efforts to ensure that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip would not take place under fire. (Ha'aretz)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held a news conference ahead of her visit to the West Bank, Jerusalem, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. She told the press, "I hope to talk with all of these nations about the changes that are sweeping the region and about their responsibilities as very central members of the Arab world to promote particularly change in the Middle East". Ms. Rice would be travelling to Ramallah and Jerusalem mainly to discuss the peace process and Israeli plans to pull out of Gaza and parts of the West Bank, starting in August. US officials said that Washington wanted to make sure the Palestinians had capable institutions in place to handle security and other issues when the Israelis depart. Ms. Rice was also likely to reassure the Palestinians that the pullout would be followed up by efforts to implement the US-backed Road Map aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State. (AFP, usinfostate.gov)

17

The Committees of Popular Resistance, made up of several Palestinian militant groups, said that its members had fired a Qassam rocket at the southern Israeli town of Sderot in response to "Israeli aggression." The IDF said that there were no casualties. (AFP)

An IDF spokesman said that soldiers had arrested four Palestinian youngsters carrying incendiary devices at the Qalandiya checkpoint near Ramallah. (UPI)

Israel reopened the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt after it had been closed for several hours over fears of an attack by militants, the IDF announced. The Israeli authorities also allowed people to enter northern Gaza Strip from Israel via Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, which had been sealed for similar reasons. (AFP)

Israeli security sources said that Israel was to build an underwater security barrier on the coastal border with the Gaza Strip in a bid to prevent any infiltrations from the sea. The navy-built barrier is expected to stretch nearly 1 km out into the Mediterranean Sea. The first 150 m would be a concrete wall with its foundations buried into the seabed. A floating metal fence would then stretch for another 800 m. (AFP)

In a poll conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey and commissioned by Ha'aretz, four out of five Palestinians were in favour of the continuation of a de facto truce agreement which had largely held since January. Some 77 per cent of those surveyed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip wanted the truce, which the militant factions referred to as a "cool down" period, to remain in place while 22 per cent were opposed to it.

The survey also found that 60 per cent of Palestinians were opposed to the disarmament of militant groups. The survey questioned 1,320 Palestinians and had a 4-per cent margin of error. (AFP)

The Doha Declaration of the G-77 plus China summit, held in Qatar on 15 and 16 June, considered the Israeli occupation as the biggest obstacle in the face of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Declaration, which was adopted at the closing session, stressed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. It called for dismantling Israeli settlements and the immediate ending of the illegal Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights. The Declaration stressed the necessity of ensuring a comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with UN Security resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as well as the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Summit and the 2002 Arab peace initiative in Beirut. PA President Abbas, who headed the Palestinian delegation to the Summit, said that the Israeli occupation held back the process of development and investment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. (Wafa)

Vice Premier Shimon Peres told Israel Radio that Israel would transfer light arms to the Palestinian Authority as part of a series of goodwill gestures Prime Minister Sharon intended to present to PA President Abbas in their meeting the following week. The Palestinians "are apparently facing many problems," Mr. Peres said. "The light arms are really needed in order to place law and order and to fight Hamas." The Vice Premier did not agree that the PA's weapons threatened Israel in a substantial way. (Ha'aretz)

The US Administration was working with the Middle East Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, James Wolfensohn, and with Palestinian, other Arab and European leaders to assemble a large new international aid package for Palestinian areas after Israel's planned disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The package, which some officials said could approach \$3 billion over three years, would be for specific projects in Gaza, including a seaport, border crossings and other infrastructure. (The New York Times)

In Brussels, EU official Elena Peresso said that the EU "was not aware of any contacts [made with Hamas]" and had reached no collective decision on whether to change its policy toward Hamas. "Hamas is still on the terrorist list," she said. (AP)

The European Council, meeting in Brussels on 16 and 17 June, adopted the "Declaration on the Middle East Peace Process" as part of the Presidency Conclusions. (www.europa.eu.int)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. (UN press release SC/8417)

18

Palestinians fired three mortar shells at the "Morag" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no injuries or damage, the IDF said. (AP)

Palestinians fired a series of mortar shells towards a settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. The armed wing of Hamas, the Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, said that it had fired five Qassam rockets in response to an assault by settlers that had wounded two Palestinians near Khan Yunis. Medical sources said that one Palestinian had been shot in the leg and the other battered around the head by a group of settlers from "Neve Dekalim".

Later in the day, Palestinians fired a handmade rocket from the Gaza Strip at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. The rocket exploded in an open field, causing no casualties or damage, an Israeli military source said. (AFP)

Three Palestinian militants opened fire at an army post in the "Kfar Darom" settlement in the Gaza Strip, sparking a gun battle that killed one of the attackers and wounded another, the IDF said. Islamic Jihad identified the dead militant as one of its members. There were no Israeli casualties reported. (AP, DPA, Reuters)

The IDF said it had discovered 50 kg of explosives in an Islamic Jihad laboratory in Jenin. During the operation, a 21-year-old Islamic Jihad member suspected of planning to carry out a suicide attack in Israel was arrested. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with PA President Abbas and PA Cabinet members in Ramallah. During the [joint press conference](#) after the meeting, Secretary Rice said: "We must all focus on the disengagement as our best chance to reenergize the [Road Map](#).... The United States will stand with President Abbas and the Palestinian people as they combat corruption, reform the security services and the justice system, and revive the economy. President Abbas has taken some concrete steps toward security reform but, of course, much more needs to be done, particularly to use actively the security forces to combat lawlessness and to combat terrorism." Concerning Hamas, she said, "The United States has no contacts with Hamas because the United States believes that Hamas is a terrorist organization." Responding to a question regarding Israel's continued construction of the wall around Jerusalem, she said, "The United States has told [the Israelis] that they should take no actions that try somehow to predetermine or prejudge the outcome of final status, because these are issues, issues of territorial borders as we try and build a contiguous and viable Palestinian State, these are issues that are going to have to be resolved at the time of final status between the two parties, mutually agreed." (AFP, AP, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))

The Palestinian Legislative Council passed a new elections law, paving the way for the legislative vote PA President Abbas had postponed in early May. Under the new law, the number of lawmakers would increase to 132 from the current 88. Half would be elected from 16 local districts, while the other half would be elected from a national list of party candidates. No date was announced, but PLC Speaker Rawhi Fattouh said that he expected the vote would be scheduled for January 2006. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

19

Two Palestinians, one from the Islamic Jihad and the other from the Abu-Rish Battalions, a Fatah breakaway faction, opened fire at Israeli soldiers reinforcing a wall along the Gaza-Egypt border, killing one soldier and wounding three. The soldiers returned fire and killed the Battalions member. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

The IDF said that it had arrested a 17-year-old Palestinian carrying five pipe bombs at the Hawara checkpoint near Nablus. The IDF also said Palestinians had opened fire at an army post guarding the "Kadim" settlement, south-east of Jenin, causing no casualties or damage. (Ha'aretz, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

A group of six armed settlers from "Kiryat Arba" seized six Palestinian shops in Hebron. Also, settlers uprooted a number of trees in a public park in the city. (IPC, Wafa)

The IDF [said](#) that it had removed four roadblocks in the Ramallah area in the past few days as part of efforts to ease restriction on the Palestinians, and that the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Israel and the northern Gaza Strip had been fully opened. An additional 1,600 merchants from the West Bank and 1,200 from the Gaza Strip were allowed to enter and work in Israel, raising the total numbers of those allowed to do so to 11,000 and 2,500, respectively. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

US Secretary of State Rice met with Prime Minister Sharon in Jerusalem. Secretary Rice told a [press conference](#) after the meeting: "Israel and the Palestinian Authority share a commitment to ensure that disengagement proceeds smoothly, without violence, and in a way that will also best help the Palestinian economy. ... Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree that the appropriate result is the complete removal of all settler homes in Gaza.

Israel will undertake the dismantling of the dwellings. Special Envoy Wolfensohn and his team will work with the PA, Israel, and appropriate partners in the international community to clean up the site. The PA is reviewing a master plan so that future land use and housing in former settlement areas are economically suitable for the Palestinian people in Gaza." She added: "Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree that Palestinian goods and people should flow in and out of Gaza at a level that will allow for economic revival to begin immediately. In this regard, Israel will, consistent with its security needs, evaluate the way it manages the crossings. The donor community, guided by Special Envoy Wolfensohn, will provide technical and financial support to this effort." (AFP, AP, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))

In an interview with Israeli public television, PA President Abbas said that the Palestinians were willing to cooperate with Israel over the demolition of settler houses under the disengagement plan. "We ... are ready to cooperate, even with the removal of the rubble, and to use that rubble in the future, whether it is for construction of the port or in other ways," Mr. Abbas said. (AFP)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit [met](#) with Prime Minister Sharon. Mr. Sharon said that the disengagement would be carried out according to the decisions of the Government and the Knesset despite difficulties. He also said that Israel would not allow weapons and ammunition to be delivered to the Palestinian Authority, but said that it did not rule out the provision of non-military equipment and that the issue would be coordinated with Lt.-Gen. Ward, US Security Coordinator in the Middle East. ([www.pmo.gov.il](http://www.pmo.gov.il))

The Israeli Housing [and Construction] Ministry said that it would issue at the end of the year tenders for the construction of 300 new homes in the "Ma'ale Adumim" settlement and 400 homes in the "Beitar Ilit" settlement. "Minister Yitzhak Herzog has approved the construction because there is a consensus in Israel to hold on to these two settlements in the future," a Ministry spokesman said. Arriving in Jordan, US Secretary of State Rice told a news conference: "I discussed both the issue of the settlements and the wall with the Prime Minister, with the Foreign Minister and with anybody else who would listen. ... The fact is that the United States has a very clear policy on this and we don't expect to see any activity from the Israelis that try and prejudge a final status agreement." (AFP)

The EU-Canada Summit held in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada, adopted a statement on the Middle East peace process as part of the [joint declaration](#). (<http://ue.eu.int>)

A survey conducted by The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University showed that 52 per cent of the Israelis supported the Government's coordination of the disengagement with the Palestinians and 32 per cent did not. The survey was conducted in late May among 500 Israelis and had a 4.5 margin of error. (AFP)

Palestinian militants opened fire on an Israeli vehicle in the Baqa Al-Sharqiya village, north of Tulkarm, killing an Israeli and wounding another from the nearby "Hermesh" settlement. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. The IDF said that a search for the militants was being conducted. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters, [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

Palestinians fired two mortar shells at the "Gush Katif" settlement block, causing no casualties, *Israel Army Radio* reported. (Ha'aretz) A 21-year-old Palestinian woman hiding explosives in her underwear unsuccessfully tried to blow herself up at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel, an IDF spokesperson said. The army defused the bomb and arrested the woman. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Israeli troops shot dead an unarmed 17-year-old Palestinian and wounded another youth near a road between the "Netzarim" settlement in the northern Gaza Strip and the border with Israel. The IDF said that the two Palestinians had entered a restricted military zone and had ignored orders to stop given through loudspeakers. Soldiers fired warning shots and then towards the legs of one of the Palestinians before the two ran off. (AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Israeli troops arrested a 16-year-old Palestinian carrying a bomb in his pocket at a checkpoint near Ramallah. (Ynet)

Addressing a special session of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Prime Minister Sharon expressed support for the demolition of settler homes in the "Gush Katif" settlements under the disengagement plan. Mr. Sharon said that the Palestinian Authority had made a specific request to have the homes demolished since they had extensive plans for the construction of high-rises in the evacuated settlements. The World Bank as well as the US Government had made a similar request, he said. Mr. Sharon also said 28 "illegal" outposts in the West Bank would be dismantled after the implementation of the disengagement plan. (Ha'aretz)

*Israeli Public Radio* reported that Israel was to pay the Palestinian Authority tens of millions of dollars to cover the cost of removing the rubble left after the demolition of settler homes in the Gaza Strip under the disengagement plan. The decision was reached during talks on 19 June between the Israeli Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz, the PA Civil Affairs Minister, Mohammed Dahlan, and the Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza

Disengagement, James Wolfensohn. (AFP)

China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met with PA President Abbas and Foreign Minister Al-Kidwa in Ramallah. "As a member of the Security Council and a faithful friend of the Palestinian people, China is ready to deploy necessary efforts to support the peace process in the region," Mr. Li said after meeting with President Abbas. Also, the Foreign Ministers signed an agreement for Beijing to fund a new Foreign Ministry building in Ramallah. The \$7 million aid package would also help finance the training of Palestinian diplomats in Beijing, foreign ministry sources said. Mr. Li had met with Prime Minister Sharon earlier in the day and with Foreign Minister Shalom the day before. (AFP)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres met with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh. Mr. Peres said after the meeting that he was confident an agreement would be reached with Egypt on the issue of the deployment of Egyptian forces to the border with the Gaza Strip after Israel's withdrawal. (AFP)

The Australian Agency for International Development [announced](http://www.aid.gov.au) a package of \$6.2 million in assistance for Palestinian refugees to be administered by UNRWA. ([www.aid.gov.au](http://www.aid.gov.au))

The US-EU Summit held in Washington, D.C., adopted a [Joint Statement by the United States and the European Union Working Together to Promote Peace, Prosperity and Progress in the Middle East](http://www.whitehouse.gov). ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov))

The Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that Mr. Annan would travel to London on 23 June to attend a meeting of the Quartet. (UN News Centre)

## 21

The IDF arrested 52 Islamic Jihad activists overnight in Tulkarm. In a policy change, the IDF had decided it would no longer limit its operations to "ticking bombs," but would go after anyone affiliated with the group, Lt. Col. Erez Winner, a senior commander in the West Bank, said. Khadr Adnan, an Islamic Jihad spokesman in the West Bank, said that if the PA and Egypt did not take action to ensure Israel's commitment to the truce, "then we will consider ourselves to be outside [it], and will call upon all Palestinian factions to do the same." "I want to condemn the cycle of violence that preceded the anticipated summit," PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said. "The Israeli arrests this morning will not add anything to sustaining the quiet." (AP)

IDF aircraft fired two missiles at an abandoned structure in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials and witnesses said. (AP)

Three mortar shells and a Qassam rocket were fired at Gaza Strip settlements. No injuries or damage were reported. (Ha'aretz)

PA security sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, warned of Israel's intention to renew the assassination of Palestinian militants and political activists within the coming days. (Xinhua)

Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza, called the Israeli-Palestinian summit a "total failure" and urged PA President Abbas to stop meeting with the Israelis. (AP)

A senior PA official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Israel had accepted in principle the idea of reopening Gaza Airport after the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and constructing Gaza Seaport, adding there would be more contacts with the Israeli side to overcome differences. (Xinhua)

Prime Minister Sharon and PA President Abbas met for more than two hours at Mr. Sharon's official residence in West Jerusalem, but failed to resolve key issues on Israel's planned Gaza withdrawal. In a sign of the divisions at the meeting, the two leaders did not hold a joint news conference afterward, and Mr. Abbas did not address journalists on his own, as scheduled, sending PA Prime Minister Qureia instead. "This was a difficult meeting, and did not live up to our expectations," Mr. Qureia told reporters. "In all the basic issues for which we were expecting positive responses, there were none". The Palestinians wanted concrete results announced at the summit, such as Israel releasing more prisoners and also easing roadblocks and other restrictions in the West Bank. Israeli officials said that there was some progress. In a speech after the meeting, Mr. Sharon said that he and Mr. Abbas "agreed during the meeting on full coordination of our exit from Gaza". He did not provide details. Mohammed Dahlan, the PA Minister in charge of coordinating Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, said, "There was nothing, nothing". After the meeting, *Israel Radio* said that Mr. Sharon gave Mr. Abbas permission to begin preparations for reopening Gaza's airport and harbour. Mr. Sharon also told Mr. Abbas that Israel would hand over Qalqilya and Bethlehem to PA control in two weeks, if the Palestinians quelled attacks, Mr. Sharon's adviser Ra'anana Gissin, told AP. Israel also would consider releasing more prisoners and allowing the return of Palestinians deported for involvement in violence, officials said. (AP)

Speaking in Singapore, PA Deputy Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah said that Israel must stop further encroachments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and halt attacks on Palestinian civilians. "The Palestinian people have the right to respond to provocation from the Israeli side," he said. (AP)

Jordan's King Abdullah II said in a statement: "The attainment of a peaceful regional framework, based on good faith and mutual interests, is necessary... A resolution must be reached to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the emergence of two peaceful States, living side by side, based on international legality." (AP)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that today's Abbas-Sharon summit would focus on the implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings, Israel's settlement activities, the separation wall, Jerusalem house demolitions, the Gaza Strip disengagement plan, control over Gaza Strip border crossings, the fate of the Gaza Airport and Seaport, and other issues. (IPC)

Hamas criticized PA President Abbas for meeting Prime Minister Sharon in Jerusalem. "This is a dangerous precedent which could lead to a recognition of the Zionist allegations proclaiming Jerusalem as their capital," the statement said. (AFP)

Israel's State Prosecution argued for the first time that the Government's decision to construct the separation wall in the Jerusalem area stemmed from political as well as security considerations, in a document provided to an extended panel of 11 High Court justices who were considering several petitions against the construction of the wall. (Ha'aretz)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

As the announced date for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank, 15 August 2005, approaches, the Secretary-General has been following events concerning the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory carefully. He welcomes the meeting today between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and looks forward to evaluating the situation at the meeting of the Quartet in London later this week. (UN press release [SG/SM/9945](#))

22

An Israeli soldier was hit by automatic weapons fire in the face in the early morning near the "Har El" settlement, north of Ramallah. The attackers apparently took the soldier's weapon, but the circumstances surrounding the incident remained unclear, military sources said. (AFP)

A 45-year-old Palestinian was injured in the foot in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip when Israeli forces stationed near the "Neve Dekalim" settlement opened heavy gunfire at homes in the area. (IPC)

An unmanned Israeli plane fired two rockets at Palestinian rocket launchers preparing to strike Israeli targets from the northern Gaza Strip, according to the IDF. An IDF spokesperson said that militants had not been targeted and witnesses said that no one had been wounded. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Israel reportedly resumed its assassination policy that had been suspended since February 2005 as part of the ceasefire deal. Israel's Public Security Minister Gideon Ezra told *Israel Army Radio*: "There was an attempt in Gaza to intercept an [Islamic Jihad] activist yesterday. It was unsuccessful. An opportunity presented itself. Any means to neutralize the organization are relevant and possible." "The attempt yesterday to kill an Islamic Jihad leader in Gaza signalled the resumption of the targeted killing policy," an Israeli security source said. Islamic Jihad's spokesman, Sheik Khoder Adnan, said this "will not intimidate or weaken us, and Israel knows that we grew stronger and more determined despite its policy of assassinations and arrests". (Reuters, UPI)

Israel arrested 11 Islamic Jihad members in a raid that ended in the early morning. (AP)

PA President Abbas asked PA Justice Minister Farid Al-Jallad to annul court verdicts against dozens of Palestinians, including some convicted of collaboration. Mr. Abbas wanted new trials for Palestinians convicted by security courts as part of efforts to implement political and security reforms aimed at curbing lawlessness and increasing accountability. The Palestinians would be re-tried in civilian courts. (Reuters)

Eival Giladi, Head of the Coordination and Strategy team in Prime Minister Sharon's Office, said in a briefing to Israeli reporters, "Israel will act in a very resolute manner to prevent terror attacks and fire while the disengagement is being implemented. If pinpoint response proves insufficient, we may have to use weaponry that causes major collateral damage, including helicopters and planes, with mounting danger to people in the surrounding area". (Reuters)

Dozens of members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades tried to obstruct PA Prime Minister Qureia's visit to Nablus. A PA Interior Ministry statement denied earlier reports that the militants had directly opened fire at Mr. Qureia's convoy, saying that the militants wanted to speak with the Prime Minister. (Xinhua)

Sami Youssef Hussein, a senior Hamas member, was released from prison and returned to the refugee camp of Jalazone near Ramallah after serving a 22-year prison sentence. (UPI)

Egypt's MENA news agency, quoting Saudi press reports, said that US Secretary of State Rice had said during her visit to the Saudi Arabia the previous day that the Quartet would expand to a sextet with the accession of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. (Xinhua)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a 126-page [report](#) entitled "Promoting Impunity: The Israeli Military's Failure to Investigate Wrongdoing", saying that since the intifada began in 2000 Israeli forces had killed or seriously injured thousands of Palestinians who were not taking part in the hostilities. But they have investigated less than 5 per cent of the fatal incidents to determine whether soldiers used force unlawfully, and the investigations they did conduct were found wanting by international standards of impartial inquiries. "Most of Israel's investigations of civilian casualties have been a sham," said Sarah Leah Whitson, HRW Middle East director. "The Government's failure to investigate the deaths of innocent civilians has created an atmosphere that encourages soldiers to think they can literally get away with murder". The military issued a statement disputing the report's findings and saying it had investigated more than 130 cases of soldiers opening fire against regulations and 28 indictments had been served, including one on a manslaughter charge. Six soldiers have been convicted, and one has been acquitted, while the rest of the cases were being processed. HRW urged the military to set up an independent body to investigate allegations of serious human rights abuses by Israeli security forces. (AFP, AP)

23

IDF soldiers have started to evacuate outposts in the centre of Hebron. Palestinian sources reported that the outposts dismantled were situated in schools in the Jabel Johar neighbourhood, west of the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Tomb of the Patriarchs). Military officials said that the measures were aimed at minimizing friction with the Palestinian population. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF reported that Palestinian gunmen had opened fire in the southern Gaza Strip in five separate incidents: twice at an army post guarding the "Neve Dekalim" settlement, twice at army posts guarding the "Rafiah Yam" settlement, and once at an army post near the border with Egypt. No injuries or damage were reported. ([www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il))

PA officials said that about 700 gunmen in Nablus would be incorporated into Palestinian police forces as a way of bringing them under control.

Abdel Fattah Hamayel, the coordinator of the Palestinian committee negotiating with the militants, said the list of Nablus militants would be finalized in the next few days. Nasser Juma, spokesman for the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Nablus, confirmed a deal was in place. (AP, Reuters)

Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz ordered the army to prepare for the handover of security control over Bethlehem to the Palestinians next week and Qalqilya a week later, army radio said. (AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas reached a deal with 220 wanted militants to hand over their personal weapons and join the PA security forces, according to a



senior PA official. In return, the PA would guarantee the men's security and take care of their social welfare. Most of the men, all of whom were in Nablus, were members of Fatah. The announcement was preceded by talks between senior PA security officials and representatives from the IDF and the Shin Bet. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said the deal was in line with the Palestinian policy to bring Fatah-linked militants under the umbrella of the security forces. (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

More than 1,000 Palestinians had been stranded at the Egypt-Gaza Strip border for two days owing to Israel's tight movement restriction, border officials said. One Egyptian border official in Rafah said that Israeli forces had stepped up security at the border and were only letting a trickle across the border, and that Palestinian families, including elderly people, children and pregnant women, had to sleep outdoors or in buses. A spokesperson for the Israel Airports Authority, which is responsible for all border crossings, said the terminal had been closed for two days after an attempted suicide bombing at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing on 20 June, but had since been reopened. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

In a [statement](#) issued after its meeting in London, the Quartet reaffirmed its support for the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, and an orderly Palestinian takeover there. It emphasized the urgent need for Israel and the Palestinians to work directly and cooperatively with each other, with the assistance of James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement. It underlined that the coordinated support of the international donor community was crucial for the success of Mr. Wolfensohn's mission and urged Arab States to engage fully in that regard. The meeting was attended by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. (*AFP, AP, BBC News, <http://ue.eu.int>*)

Following is an excerpt from the [statement](#) of the Chairman of the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting held in London: "We underlined our commitment to working with the parties and the international community, through the [Road Map](#), towards the goal of two viable states living side by side in peace and security. We call on the Palestinian Authority to press ahead with the reform agenda, in particular to deliver on their security commitments under the Road Map. We urge Israel to meet its Road Map commitments, particularly on settlements. We affirmed G-8 support for a negotiated solution to the Middle East conflict in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions." (*[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)*)

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Palestinian Agribusiness Partnership Activity (PAPA), a three-year project designed to benefit the Palestinian economy. Funds for the project would come from the \$200 million increase in annual US aid to the West Bank and Gaza. PAPA will initially be involved in the Palestinian agribusiness sector through investments in greenhouses, warehouses, farm machinery and equipment, that will create an additional 2,000 permanent jobs and an estimated \$10 million in annual export earnings. (*WAFA, [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)*)

24

The IDF reported the following incidents: Palestinians fired a mortar shell at a settlement in the northern Gaza Strip, slightly wounding an Israeli; Palestinians opened fire at two Israeli vehicles south-east of Tulkarm, injuring an Israeli; Palestinians opened fire at two army posts in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no injury or damage; a wanted Islamic Jihad militant was arrested near the village of Beit Um El Tahta, west of Ramallah. (*[www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il)*)

Palestinian militants shot at a group of Israelis at a hitchhiking post, killing a 17-year-old man and wounding four near Hebron. Sources said a Palestinian vehicle drove up to the Beit Haggai junction, south-west of Hebron, where Jewish settlers congregate to catch rides. The attack was claimed by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. (*AFP*)

Israeli security broke up a protest by Palestinians, Israelis and foreign activists, who were demonstrating against the construction of the wall near the village of Bil'in, west of Ramallah. About 15 people were arrested, most of them Israelis. (*AP*)

An Islamic Jihad leader, Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, said that his group would call off the ceasefire if Israel attempted to target its leaders or any other Palestinian leaders. (*Ha'aretz, As-Safir*)

The Islamic Jihad staged rallies in Ramallah and in the northern Gaza Strip. The group said that it had not abandoned the ceasefire but described it as being in serious jeopardy. "The truce is on its last legs and is just waiting for the death blow from the Israeli occupier," according to the group's spokesman. Meanwhile, Palestinian security and Palestinian militants exchanged gunfire in Jenin. The police cordoned off parts of the town and arrested 10 suspects. (*AP*)

The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture said that the Ministry had drawn up plans to double the number of settlers living in the Jordan Valley. "The plan which has already won approval from within different ministries will increase the number of residents in 21 settlements by 50 per cent in a year and then by a further 50 per cent in the following year," a spokesman for the Ministry said. A total of 6,300 settlers currently live in the Jordan Valley, according to official figures. (*AFP*)

The Israeli military said that USAID had delivered medical supplies worth \$500,000 to four hospitals in the Gaza Strip at the request of the Israeli Liaison and Coordination Administration. (*[www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il)*)

25

A Palestinian girl was wounded when settlers attacked her West Bank home. "The settlers drove up in a Mitsubishi from the nearby settlement of 'Beit Hagai' and one of them threw an explosive device that wounded my 13-year-old sister Mayada," Maher Abu Fantuna said. The girl was taken to hospital in Hebron with shrapnel wounds to her face and body. (*AFP*)

Israeli troops abandoned positions they had set up in three Palestinian schools in Hebron since September 2000. The three schools, housed in a single complex, were located in the Jabal Joha neighbourhood that lay adjacent to the settlement of "Kiryat Arba". Before the IDF takeover, the schools served around 2,000 Palestinian pupils between the ages of 6 and 15. The troops that pulled out would be relocated to a smaller, newly-built post nearby, a spokesperson said. (*AFP*)

Anglican Church leaders voted to call on their member churches to reconsider their investments in Israel. The Anglican Consultative Council, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, voted unanimously for the motion. The resolution called on the Church to pressure firms involved in Israel's activities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (*AFP, The Guardian*)

26

IDF troops arrested two Palestinians in the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*)

Two 20-year-old Palestinians were seriously wounded when an explosive device left by Israeli forces went off south-east of Khan Yunis. One of the two was injured in the head by shrapnel, and the other's feet had to be amputated. Two Palestinian children, 11 and 12 years of age, were also injured moderately in the explosion. (*IPC*)

Israeli troops began demolishing a string of abandoned beachfront cottages in the southern Gaza Strip, according to settler leaders. Over the past few weeks, settlers had started turning them into liveable homes. Clashes broke out between settlers and their supporters and Israeli troops as army bulldozers demolished 11 cottages. Some 14 individuals were reportedly injured and three of the demonstrators arrested. (AP, Ha'aretz) A second Israeli teenager, age 15, died of his wounds from the drive-by shooting attack by Palestinian gunmen on 24 June. (Ha'aretz) Israeli officials said that the US had turned up the pressure on Israel to stop expanding West Bank settlements. Officials referred to a meeting a week earlier with US Secretary of State Rice who did not threaten any particular penalty for settlement expansion but was displeased by construction she saw when travelling from Jerusalem to Ramallah for meetings with Palestinian leaders.

The Israeli Cabinet approved new incentives for settlers to be evacuated from the Gaza Strip, including deeply discounted land in a prime coastal area not far from the Gaza Strip. (AP, The Guardian)

Settlers from Hebron assaulted a Palestinian resident of the old part of the city. Piras Albatch was rushed to the Soroka Medical Centre in Be'er Sheva. No one was arrested in the incident. (Ha'aretz)

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom warned the EU against renewed contacts with Hamas. Mr. Shalom told his visiting Austrian counterpart Ursula Plassnik: "We would like to have the support of the European Union [in negotiations] between us and the Palestinians but at the same time the Europeans should not have any kind of dialogue with Hamas. Any kind of dialogue ... will undermine the hope we have now in the Middle East." Ms. Plassnik, who did not address the issue of Hamas, said the EU "has always condemned violence and terrorism." She added, "The obstacles to resolution of this conflict can be removed one by one and we have seen a number of encouraging signals." (AFP)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef said that the Palestinian security forces would be given all the necessary resources to put an end to the lawlessness in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. "There is a security mess in the Palestinian street and there is an absence of law which threatens the lives of all the Palestinian people. We will supply you with whatever you want and need to protect you and to help you do your duty," he told members of the Palestinian security. (AFP)

A delegation from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) testified before the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories. Iyad Alami, Director of the Legal Unit, and Hamdi Shaqqura, Director of the Democratic Development Unit, represented the PCHR. In his testimony, Mr. Alami focused on the absence of justice in the Israeli judicial system, which he said was used as a means of providing legal cover for Israeli military activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Mr. Shaqqura devoted his testimony to the house demolitions and collective punishment perpetrated by the Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians. (PCHR press release ref. no. 75/005)

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said that the IDF continued to violate international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights by restricting the freedom of movement of its ambulances and medical teams. The delay and denial of access, arbitrary searches and attacks on ambulances by settlers had a negative effect on the wounded and sick, in particular, in al-Bireh, Bethlehem and Nablus, the organization said. (Wafa)

27

Israeli forces destroyed a 10- to 20-m-long tunnel dug by Palestinians from Khan Yunis to the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. (The Jerusalem Post, Ynet)

Settlers in the Gaza Strip set up a makeshift outpost on the rubble of buildings the Israeli military knocked down the day before. The IDF declined to comment on the outpost or say whether the military planned to evacuate the youths there. (AP)

Islamic Jihad members fired six homemade rockets on two settlements in the Gaza Strip. The IDF reported three mortar attacks on the settlements and no injuries. (AP)

Israel Army Radio reported the following incidents: Police detained three Palestinian youngsters carrying Molotov cocktails at the Qalandiya checkpoint near Ramallah; shots were fired at an army post in the "Ganim" settlement, south-east of Jenin, but there were no injuries or damage; two mortar shells and a Qassam rocket were fired at the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip; there were no injuries but some damage.

(The Jerusalem Post)

Palestinian militants fired on the West Bank settlement of "Kadim." (Ha'aretz)

Israel's Construction and Housing Minister Isaac Herzog told the ministerial committee on settlements that construction works in 50 West Bank settlements had been suspended. He also presented a series of steps taken to restrain settlement expansion in the West Bank as part of an effort to implement the recommendations of the Sasson Commission on illegal outposts. Taliya Sasson, author of the report on illegal outposts that was presented to Prime Minister Sharon, said that "three months after the presenting of the report nothing has yet been done." The construction of illegal outposts continued unhindered, she said. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli military court convicted Wahid Taysir, an Israeli soldier, of manslaughter in the killing of British activist Tom Hurndall in 2003. The court found that Mr. Taysir shot Mr. Hurndall with a sniper rifle using a telescopic sight during an army operation in the Gaza Strip in April 2003. He faced up to 20 years in prison. (AP)

The PA discouraged Palestinian real estate agents from purchasing lands adjacent to Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. The PA Ministry of Interior said in a statement that dealings in land either owned by other Palestinian families or confiscated by the settlers and the IDF in the last 15 years would be barred. (AP)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef reportedly asked the Islamic Jihad to join a national committee observing the expected Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

28

Israeli forces placed a number of roadblocks around Jenin, conducted searches and questioned dozens of residents. In Hebron, Israeli soldiers broke into a number of homes and arrested three Palestinians, including a 13-year-old youth. (IPC, Wafa)

A Palestinian was reportedly shot dead late by Israeli troops near Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, IDF sources indicated. The soldiers reportedly fired at a group of militants who were moving close to the "Morag" settlement's fence. Palestinian residents said that three members of the Ahmed Abu Rish Brigades, an armed group affiliated to Fatah, were near the settlement. However, the killing was not confirmed by Palestinian security sources and residents. (AP, DPA, Reuters, Xinhua)

Following the weekly Cabinet meeting, PA Prime Minister Qureia told reporters, "The Cabinet decided that all its Ministers will be staying for three days in Gaza and one day in Jenin, and it decided to be in a state of emergency till the withdrawal is finalized." "We do not want to give any excuse to anybody to hold the Palestinian leadership responsible and we will carry out our duties to achieve a smooth, quiet and organized withdrawal," he added. (Xinhua)

The PA's State Information Service reported that 44 Palestinians had been killed, 451 injured and 1,119 arrested by Israeli forces during the period between 8 February and 20 June 2005. (IPC)

Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the Deputy Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Karen AbuZayd, as the new Commissioner-General of the Agency. (UN News Centre)

29

The IDF said in a statement that it had arrested Wasam Mohammed Radi, age 30, a Palestinian policeman suspected of involvement in the lynching of

two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah at the start of the intifada. He was arrested in Beituniya on 22 May. (AFP)

The Islamic Jihad's armed wing Saraya Al-Quds, Fatah's armed wing Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Popular Resistance Committees Organization's armed wing Salah Al-Din Brigades said in a leaflet that they had fired two mortar shells at the "Netzarim" settlement, causing heavy explosions. The IDF said that no injuries were reported. The three groups and other armed factions had recently formed a joint operations room in the Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

PA Minister of Civil Affairs Mohamed Dahlan said, "We have definite information that the Israeli settlers are poisoning the lands in order to damage it and to prevent the Palestinians from using it in the future." PA Planning Minister Ghassan El-Khatib announced the PA's intention to sign contracts with international experts to scan the evacuated Israeli settlements for mines, bombs and explosives. Mr. Khatib also said that the PA would form a special civil court to look at Palestinians' claims to land confiscated by the settlers. Any Palestinian who owned land in or around the settlements could appeal to this court. According to the Minister, some 5 per cent of the settlement lands are owned by Palestinian individuals and 95 per cent will be classified as governmental. (Xinhua)

Some 20 young Israeli settlers went on a stone-throwing rampage after clashing with Israeli troops at an abandoned Palestinian house they had occupied on the outskirts of the "Gush Katif" settlement block, close to the "Shirat Hayam" outpost in the Gaza Strip. Two days earlier Israeli activists had seized and barricaded themselves inside the building they renamed the "Tal Yam" outpost. The settlers attacked Palestinian residents of the nearby Al-Mawasi area, who responded by throwing rocks, and soldiers were firing into the air to separate the sides. Hospital officials said that a Palestinian was critically wounded after being hit in the head by stones. The IDF said that one soldier and one settler had been slightly wounded. The Palestinians also said that armed settlers had broken into the only medical clinic in Al-Mawasi the night before, destroying medical equipment and the clinic's only ambulance, parked outside. (AP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

An Israeli farmer began dismantling his greenhouses in the "Gadid" settlement in the Gaza Strip, the first in the "Gush Katif" settlement block to take steps to prepare for the disengagement. Salim Michaeli said that he was the first Gaza farmer to actively prepare for the withdrawal and that he was folding up his 60 greenhouses while he negotiated with the Government over a new place for them in Israel. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli helicopter fired a missile toward a warehouse in the Gaza Strip late. "Israeli aviation attacked a hangar in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, where arms were being held, particularly Qassam rockets and mortar rounds," an IDF spokesman said. No one was injured in the attack. (AFP, AP)

The IDF declared the Gaza Strip a closed military zone. Army spokeswoman Brig. Miri Regev said the order was issued because of extremist settlers' activities and reports that additional Israeli extremists were headed to the area. An IDF statement said that "the GOC Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, signed an order" The IDF declared the Gaza Strip a closed military zone. Army spokeswoman Brig. Miri Regev said the order was issued because of extremist settlers' activities and reports that additional Israeli extremists were headed to the area. An IDF statement said that "the GOC Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, signed an order" limiting the entrance "to Israelis working in the area, providing essential services, to Israelis who are listed as residents of the area, and to others whose entry is permitted by the authorities." (AP, UPI)

European Parliament President Josep Borrell Fontelles held meetings in Ramallah with PA President Abbas and the Palestinian Legislative Council. "I was frank in saying that withdrawal will only be a success if it is a first step toward a final settlement and not a step on its own, Gaza first, not Gaza last," Mr. Borrell said. Responding to recent reports that European officials had been meeting with Hamas leaders, Mr. Borrell said that he had no knowledge that such meetings had been taking place and said there was still no reason to open lines of communication with Hamas. (AP)

The UK's BG Group announced on that it would start drilling the so-called "Gaza Marine-3" well in August 2006 using the machinery of Atwood Oceanics, which had been used in drilling the first two wells off the Gaza Strip coast. The group won a licence to explore for gas in Gaza offshore waters in 1999 and pledged to invest \$500 million to develop the Palestinian natural gas industry over the next 25 years. One year later, BG discovered significant amounts of gas in the "Gaza Marine-1" and "Gaza Marine-2" wells. The company has yet to embark on commercial development, however. Prospects for developing the field would improve if recently announced plans for the construction of a gas-based power station to supply both Israel and the Palestinians took shape. (Business Middle East)

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Two Israeli soldiers were reportedly kidnapped in the West Bank. An anonymous caller to AFP claimed responsibility for the kidnapping, later claiming that the soldiers were killed, and said that he was speaking for a cell from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and one from the armed wing of Islamic Jihad. Reuters quoted a spokesman for the Group of Martyr Ayman Jawdeh as saying that militants had kidnapped two soldiers at noon after they had entered Nablus. He said that the soldiers had not been killed, but would be "if any of our militants is harmed". He listed the group's demands for releasing the soldiers, including the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, returning the remains of dead Palestinians in Israeli hands and removing all Israeli checkpoints around Palestinian cities. A spokesman for the Brigades as a whole, who gave his name as Abu Mahmud, told the Palestinian media that the organization had not kidnapped any soldiers. The IDF had not commented on the abduction. (AFP, Reuters, UPI)

Palestinian witnesses said that as soon as news about the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers had spread, an Israeli force backed by tanks entered the Balata refugee camp near Nablus under heavy fire cover, raiding houses. Palestinian medics said that three Palestinians had been injured during the incursion. An earlier AFP report said that eight jeeps had taken part in an incursion into the centre of Nablus during which troops opened fire at a group of youths throwing stones. A later Reuters report stated that Palestinian security forces were also searching for Israelis in Nablus. (AFP, Reuters, UPI)

The Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said in a leaflet that "a Qassam rocket was fired and exploded inside the Jewish settlement of "Neve Dekalim". Israel Radio reported that an explosion in the settlement had caused no injuries. The Brigades intensified attacks on the Gaza Strip settlements overnight, claiming responsibility for launching over 10 homemade rockets at the settlements of "Gadid", "Neve Dekalim" and "Netzer Hazani" in response to settlers' actions in the Al-Mawasi area west of Khan Yunis the previous day when the settlers had occupied Palestinians' houses and had attacked a clinic. (Xinhua)

Prime Minister Sharon denounced an attempted lynching of a Palestinian by Israeli youths, calling it "a barbaric, wild and heartless act", and vowed not to allow extremists to halt his Gaza Strip pullout plan. Khaled Al-Astal, age 16, was still in a serious condition after being attacked on 29 June by a mob of Israeli youths who had taken over a house in the Al-Mawasi area of the Gaza Strip. Israeli security forces stormed the house, making 35 arrests. "What is happening in front of our eyes is not a battle over disengagement from Gaza, but a battle over the image of the State," he added.

"This is not a situation I will allow to continue. The situation is not lost, and we will win". Israel's Public Security Minister Gideon Ezra vowed that those who had tried to lynch the Palestinian youth would be brought to justice. (AFP)

Hundreds of Israeli soldiers and paramilitary police raided the Palm Beach Hotel in the Gaza Strip and went room-to-room to remove about 150 Israeli settlers, who had stockpiled food and surrounded the hotel with barbed-wire fences. Some of the Israeli squatters were carried out by soldiers, and arrests were reported. No one resisted violently, but several squatters burned tyres in protest. (AP)

The 16-member Fatah Central Committee met the first time in more than five years in Amman. On top of the agenda was "reforming and reorganizing Fatah's Committee through elections and holding a wider conference to discuss these issues," said PA Information Minister Nabil Sha'ath. Salim Zaanoun, speaker of the Palestinian National Council, said that Committee members would also discuss in the following two days the relationship between the PA Foreign Ministry and the PLO's Political Department headed by Farouk Kaddoumi. "The meeting will seek to

assign a date and venue for a meeting of the Palestine National Council and discuss its future composition ... as well as the inclusion of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad (in the PNC)," Committee member Zakariya Al-Agha said. The Central Committee will seek to fill five vacancies resulting from the death of the incumbents over the past few years, officials said. *(AFP, AP)*

Prime Minister Sharon said the Gaza Strip pullout "will be implemented according to the approved schedule, starting in seven weeks from now."

"Hooliganism ... is not the way of Judaism," he said. "We will not allow anyone to raise a hand against an Israeli soldier or police officer." *(AP)*

Asked during a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee whether he believed the Palestinians were capable of enforcing the law and suppressing attacks on Israel, Lt.-Gen. William E. Ward, US Security Coordinator in the Middle East, responded: "The ability will come after time . . . it does not currently exist." Mr. Ward said that only about 20,000 of the 58,000 Palestinians with security jobs actually showed up for work. During the same hearings, James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement said: "The dialogue between the two parties has increased... My experience in the first 60 days gives me hope that the process of disengagement from Gaza can lead both sides back to the Road Map." *(AP)*

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