

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

**Monthly media monitoring review
April 2011**

Monthly highlights

- Judge Goldstone says fact-finding mission did not have evidence Israel targeted civilians during “Operation Cast Lead” ([1 April](#))
- Former senior Israeli Defense establishment figures present new peace initiative ([5 April](#))
- IMF report states that PA financial institutions ready for statehood ([5 April](#))
- League of Arab States calls for UN-imposed no-fly zone over Gaza and lifting of Israeli siege of the territory ([10 April](#))
- AHLC meeting opens in Brussels ([13 April](#))
- EU High Representative Ashton and Prime Minister Fayyad sign trade agreement giving duty-free access for Palestinian products to the EU market ([13 April](#))
- Goldstone report co-authors stand by their work ([14 April](#))
- Prime Minister Fayyad says donors "welcomed" his three-year plan to be presented at a pledging conference in June, requiring \$4.5 billion ([15 April](#))
- US Congresswoman warns US could reduce aid to Palestinians if statehood is pursued at the UN ([18 April](#))
- Israeli intellectuals announce start of campaign to support the declaration of a Palestinian State along 1967 borders ([20 April](#))
- Fatah and Hamas negotiate initial reconciliation agreement in Cairo ([27 April](#))
- United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People opens in Helsinki ([28 April](#))

I

Muhammad Al-Rayyan, a Hamas leader from Ramallah, was arrested by Israeli troops on suspicions of involvement in attacks against Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers attacked Palestinian residents of Qusra, a village southwest of Nablus, as they performed Friday prayers near the “Shilo” settlement built illegally on their lands. (*Wafa*)

Greek parties expressed support for the “Freedom for Palestine” campaign, which aims to collect a million signatures from European citizens calling for a ban on the import of settlement goods and submitting them to the European Parliament. Youth of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, the current majority party in the Hellenic Parliament, issued a statement that expressed full support for the campaign. Two other parties took similar positions. (*Wafa*)

Israeli settlers burned a store in the centre of Hebron on Shalala Street, activists said. Palestinian firefighters put out the blaze that caused damage to stores. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, called Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a bid to stop a flotilla that was supposed to set sail to the Gaza Strip in May. He told Mr. Ban that the flotilla was being organized by extreme Islamists who were interested only in provocation. He also added that the flotilla's key goal was to fuel tensions, as Gaza was open to all types of goods brought in via land. (*Haaretz*)

The Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Muhammad Sbeih, called for a unified international stance to prosecute Israeli war

criminals of the Gaza war and welcomed a Human Rights Council resolution for the submission of the Goldstone report to the Security Council as a way to "help bring justice to civilian victims of Israel and make Israel abide by the international humanitarian law". (Wafa)

Iman Qraq'a, a 14-year-old student at a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the Aida refugee camp, won first place in the Palestinian Science Fair after developing several possible ways to prevent death from elevated carbon monoxide concentrations. (Ma'an News Agency)

Judge Richard Goldstone wrote in an [op-ed](#) article in the *Washington Post* titled "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and war crimes": "I regret that our fact-finding mission did not have [Israeli] evidence explaining the circumstances in which we said civilians in Gaza were targeted, because it probably would have influenced our findings about intentionality and war crimes." (The Washington Post)

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Three Palestinians were killed and a fourth apparently critically injured when an Israeli drone fired a missile at their car near Khan Yunis, medical sources said. Reports said that the victims were members of the military wing of Hamas. (Wafa)

Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Salam Fayyad met with Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich of Germany. The two discussed PA efforts to build infrastructure for an independent State. Mr. Fayyad briefed the official on the work of the security forces which Germany helped build and train. (Wafa)

3

Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that Israel planned to deploy four more batteries of its "Iron Dome" missile defence system and that a second battery would soon be operational on the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Nabil Sha'ath, Fatah Central Committee member and head of the Palestinian Constitutional Committee, said that "preparing the Palestinian constitution emphasizes demanding the General Assembly to recognize the Palestinian State". He said that the document would be published in the media before being put to a referendum. (Wafa, Xinhua)

Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak agreed on a new zoning plan for the settlement of "Nofim". The move would enable further development of the settlement. (Ynetnews)

Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian man south of Nablus and destroyed water pipes in the area, officials said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Defense Minister Barak said: "Goldstone's article is very important, but it's too little and too late. We'll make him face an international United Nations forum and speak out." "We will demand justice; the Goldstone Report must be tossed into history's trash can," Prime Minister Netanyahu said. Foreign Ministry sources said that Israel would most probably be unable to bring about the cancellation of the report. At best, Israel could try to convince Mr. Goldstone to turn his op-ed article into an official letter to the UN. (Haaretz, Ynetnews)

In a press release, Nabil abu Rudeineh, the Spokesperson to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, said that Judge Goldstone's comments "do not change the fact that Israel committed a massacre and war crimes in Gaza during 'Operation Cast Lead', leaving more than 1,500 Palestinians dead." (Ynetnews)

4

Israeli forces entered Bil'in, searching homes and harassing residents, reportedly seeking international solidarity activists who often remained in the area to document rights violations. (Ma'an News Agency)

President Shimon Peres met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Washington, D.C. In his statement to the press, the Israeli President said that "the Middle East is in the midst of storm", and he hoped that the recent turmoil would "bring more security, peace and democracy – a change that Israel will support". He had said earlier that "Israel cannot take upon itself a one-sided agreement by the UN to establish a Palestinian State". He added that there was a built-in majority at the UN that was against Israel and therefore it was important to reopen negotiations with the Palestinians without delay. (Haaretz)

Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahhar said that his organization had initiated talks in Gaza with Fatah regarding a potential reconciliation. He indicated that Egypt would not directly join the dialogue but would monitor it from a distance. (Ma'an News Agency, MENA)

Representatives of several Palestinian factions and independent figures left for Cairo for a series of talks, under Egyptian mediation, and meetings with delegates from the Middle East and Europe, a source close to the meetings said. The focus would be on Palestinian unity, the official said, but declined to identify factions that would be present. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Foreign Minister of Israel, Avigdor Liberman, warned the UN against the recognition of an independent Palestinian State. "It will destroy everything we have accomplished to date," he said, without giving further details about the achievements between the two sides. (Press TV)

The Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Committee was expected to approve 942 housing units in the "Gilo" settlement. (The Jerusalem Post)

Defense Minister Barak paved the way for more settlement construction when he approved master plans for "Nofim", "Eshkolot", "Rotem" and "Hemdat". (The Jerusalem Post)

The US State Department called on Israel to halt settlement building, adding that it would be detrimental to building good faith between Israel and the Palestinians, and that the lack of resolution of the conflict "harms Israel, harms the Palestinians, and harms the interests of the United States and the international community". (Haaretz)

Dirar abu Sisi, a Gaza engineer abducted in Ukraine, was indicted by Israel on charges of helping Hamas develop longer-range Qassam rockets over the past nine years. (Ynetnews)

The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, which was organizing a new flotilla to Gaza next month, urged Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon not to help Israel stop the flotilla. US human rights activists, who were preparing to sail a US ship in the 22-nation flotilla, sharply criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu's request to the Secretary-General to stop the boats from sailing. (Wafa)

"The [Hamas] organization is disappointed with Goldstone's new stance, which accepts Israel's position," read a statement published by Hamas Spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri. (Ynetnews)

Cedric Sapey, Spokesman for the Human Rights Council, said that for the Goldstone report to be withdrawn, Judge Richard Goldstone would have to submit a formal request to the Council, which he had not done, adding that "UN reports are not cancelled on the basis of an op-ed in a newspaper". (AP)

A group of young Palestinian women launched a Facebook page to discuss problems they face due to the occupation and discrimination.

(Wafa)

5

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed an armed Palestinian after spotting a group approaching the Gaza border fence and placing an explosive device.

Palestinians said that the workers were collecting stones for construction. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch of Israel toured Sderot and said that the city's residents must brace for more shelling. According to *Israel Radio*, Mr. Aharonovitch also said that Israel was on a collision course with the Palestinians and could not allow the threat to expand to Tel Aviv's doorstep. (The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

Fatah military groups in the Gaza Strip asked Hamas authorities to return the weapons seized from the fighters in 2007 to repulse a possible Israeli invasion. (Ma'an News Agency)

Details of a new peace initiative entitled "Peace with our enemies" were published by the *New York Times*. The initiative calls for the 1967 lines to be the basis for a two-State solution, including a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as capital. Some 40 people have signed, including former Shin Bet Chiefs Yaakov Peri and Ami Ayalon, former Mossad Chief Danny Yatom and former IDF Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, General (Res.) Anram Mitzna, former Minister of Police Moshe Shahal and Yuval Rabin, son of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. According to the plan, Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) would not be governed by either side, but the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City would remain under Israeli sovereignty. The plan proposes financial compensation for Palestine refugees as well as return to Palestine, not Israel, with "mutually agreed-upon symbolic exceptions". (Ynetnews)

"The two Presidents will discuss events in the Middle East and around the world and they will discuss, obviously, efforts that need to be taken towards finding a compromise in the Middle East peace process," President Obama's Spokesman Jay Carney said ahead of the meeting with President Shimon Peres. (AFP)

PA President Abbas said that the Israeli Government's plan to build new housing in the settlements would kill the peace process. (Wafa)

The Spokesman for UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, issued [statement](#) describing settlement activity as illegal and contrary to the Road Map. In the statement, Mr. Serry called on the Government of Israel to halt further planning for new settlement units, which undermines efforts to bring about resumed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and prejudices final status discussions. (www.unsco.org)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club demanded that the international community and human rights organizations intervene and stop Israel from deporting eight Palestinian prisoners because this decision contradicted international law and human rights. (Wafa)

Israeli military officials handed out three summonses to Jenin residents overnight and detained 10 more in other parts of the West Bank for questioning. (Ma'an News Agency)

The European Union announced a contribution of €20 million to help the PA pay the March salaries and pensions of almost 85,000 public servants and pensioners, both in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

US State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner said that the Obama Administration had carefully read Judge Richard Goldstone's op-ed article in the *Washington Post*, and that the US had made it clear from the time the report was published that the US did not see any evidence that the Government of Israel had committed any war crimes, nor did it intentionally target civilians. (www.state.gov)

Human rights activists, academics and intellectuals in Gaza sent a letter to the EU Representative to the West Bank and Gaza Strip criticizing the EU countries for voting against or abstaining on the Goldstone report resolution in the UN Human Rights Council on 25 March, and said that this European position provided a political cover and immunity for Israel against international law and accountability. (Ma'an News Agency)

Interior Minister of Israel Eli Yishai said that Judge Goldstone had promised to work to nullify the report and had accepted his invitation to visit Israel. (AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Judge Goldstone said that he did not plan to seek nullification of his report. In a telephone interview, Mr. Goldstone said, "As appears from the *Washington Post* article, information subsequent to publication of the report did meet with the view that one correction should be made with regard to intentionality on the part of Israel... Further information as a result of domestic investigations could lead to further reconsideration, but as presently advised, I have no reason to believe any part of the report needs to be reconsidered at this time." (AP)

Pakistani human rights lawyer Hina Jilani, who was a member of the four-person committee that compiled the Goldstone report, said in an interview: "No process or acceptable procedure would invalidate the UN report; if it does happen, it would be seen as a suspect move. The UN cannot allow impunity to remain and will have to act if it wants to remain a credible international governing body." (The Guardian)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a report that PA financial institutions were ready for statehood. The IMF credited reforms and a "prudent fiscal policy" with enabling the Palestine Monetary Authority to "fulfil core functions of a central bank". The report also stated that the reforms had allowed the PA to reduce its dependence on foreign aid for its regular budget, from \$1.8 billion in 2008 to \$1.2 billion in 2010, and less than \$1 billion projected for 2011. It found that Palestinians were now "able to conduct the sound economic policies expected of a future well-functioning Palestinian State". (AP)

Israeli soldiers arrested 10 Palestinians from the village of Awarta, south-east of Nablus. (Wafa)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry's Spokesman said: "We are shocked and saddened by Juliano Mer-Khamis' murder [in the Jenin refugee camp]; not only was he a unique and talented actor and director, he was also a symbol of coexistence and peace". (Ma'an News Agency)

6

An Israeli aircraft attacked two targets in the Gaza Strip, wounding four people, among them a pregnant woman, Palestinian medics and witnesses said. They said that a group of militants and a plastics factory, both east of Gaza City, had been the target, adding that all of those wounded had been at the factory during the attack. An Israeli military spokesperson said that one of its aircrafts had hit "two terror tunnels". (AFP)

Palestinian security sources said that police in Jenin had charged a former Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade militant with the murder of Juliano Mer-Khamis, the Israeli-Palestinian director of the Freedom Theatre who had been murdered the previous day in the Jenin refugee camp. (AFP)

Israeli soldiers confiscated several agricultural tractors that belonged to Palestinian farmers in the Jordan Valley and brought them to a nearby settlement. (IMEMC)

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Ali Ahmed Karti, accused Israel of launching a missile strike a day earlier near Port Sudan that killed two people, including a man described by Palestinian security officials as Abdul-Latif Ashkar, head of weapons procurement for Hamas, who had replaced Mahboub al-Mabhoub, who had been killed in Dubai. Prime Minister Netanyahu commented: "There are those who think Israel's hand is everywhere in the world and behind every event, but that's not always true." (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

The IDF was expected to announce in the coming week changes to its policy of investigating military action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to the new policy, incidents in which a Palestinian civilian is killed by IDF fire will be brought to the army's criminal investigation division for immediate investigation, unless deaths occurred within the realm of an "operation of clearly combative nature". (*Haaretz*)

Israeli officials said that Prime Minister Netanyahu would ask the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, to drop her support for a proposal led by Germany, Britain and France for endorsing a Palestinian State when meeting with her in Berlin on 7 April. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said during the week: "What the UK, France and Germany are putting to the Quartet is that the basis of negotiations set out by the Quartet ... should include 1967 borders, with land swaps, a just settlement for refugees, and Jerusalem as the shared capital of both States." (*AP*)

US State Department Spokesman Mark Toner said that the US remained committed to achieving an agreement on two States through good faith negotiations and strongly supported the goal of fully normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world. He welcomed all ideas to achieve those goals, adding, "We look forward to hearing more about the Israel peace initiative and believe it could possibly make a positive contribution". (www.state.gov)

At a news conference in Tel Aviv, Yacov Peri, a former head of Shin Bet, told *BBC* that he and the other signatories of the "Israeli Peace Initiative" felt the Government of Israel needed to be pushed to break the deadlock in the peace process. "We are considered peace refuseniks, frozen, without initiative", he said. Prime Minister Netanyahu's spokesman said: "We welcome all offers by Israelis to end the conflict. However, the guidelines of a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians are known... A future Palestinian State would be based in Gaza and the West Bank. A deal should result from negotiations and not dictations as the 2002 Arab [Peace] Initiative was." (*BBC*)

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, said in a statement: "I am deeply disappointed by the approval of 942 new housing units in the Israeli settlement of Gilo, East Jerusalem. The EU is also closely following upcoming plans for settlements on the Mount Scopus Slopes, in Har Homa C and Pisgat Ze'ev. These plans may further damage an already fragile political environment. I reiterate that the EU considers that settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law, undermine trust between the parties and constitute an obstacle to peace." (*Haaretz, www.consilium.europa.eu*)

Settlers from "Itamar" destroyed dozens of tree saplings near Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Since January, Israeli authorities have demolished 176 Palestinian buildings, displacing 333 people, including 154 children, according to UNRWA.

Half of the demolished structures were houses, while the rest included stables, which could be just as valuable to a herding community, UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness said. (*IRIN*)

The Israeli army overnight detained 10 Palestinians in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The US Permanent Representative to the UN, Susan Rice, said that she wanted the Goldstone report to "disappear", and did not think it could be amended. (*Reuters*)

Sources said that President of Israel Shimon Peres would be asking UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to nullify the Goldstone report in light of Mr. Goldstone's regrets regarding some of his findings. (*Haaretz*)

7

Israeli warplanes carried out strikes targeting an area near the Rafah refugee camp, including tunnels near the Salah al-Din area and the Barazili neighbourhood, that injured one man. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) also fired one missile east of the Zeytoun area of Gaza City. No injuries had been reported. A military statement said strikes had targeted smuggling tunnels and a "terror tunnel". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli tanks shelled Gaza City and Rafah, killing a 50-year-old man and injuring six others, after a mortar from Gaza hit a school bus in southern Israel. A 13-year-old boy was seriously wounded and several others hurt by the mortar, which landed near a kibbutz. None of the militant groups in Gaza claimed responsibility. Israel also launched an air strike in northern Gaza on a training camp run by Hamas. (*BBC*)

Hundreds of IDF soldiers entered the village of Awarta, near "Itamar" settlement, where five members of the Fogel family had been murdered, imposing a curfew and rounding up some 200 of the village women, some in their 60s, local council head Qais Awwad said. The Detainees' Centre in Nablus condemned the mass detentions as illegal and arbitrary. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

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

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told *Voice of Israel* radio station that Israel would use "all necessary force" to stop Gaza fire and harm to Israeli civilians. Following his meeting with the Czech President in Prague, he said, "The attack on a school bus [on 7 April] crossed the line. Whoever tries to hurt and murder children, his blood be on his own head". (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

In a visit to Cairo, PA President Abbas met with the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and Head of the Higher Military Council, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi. According to *MENA*, they reviewed Egypt's support for the Palestinian cause in light of the circumstances that Egypt was undergoing, as well as the need to pursue dialogue and reconcile points of view for Fatah and Hamas to reach reconciliation. They also tackled the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and "the need to make efforts and initiatives to relaunch it". The President also met with independent figures who gathered in Cairo last week to put an end to Palestinian division. Mr. Abbas would also meet with the Prime Minister of Egypt, Essam Sharaf, and with Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa. (*Ma'an News Agency, MENA*)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Israel, after talks in Berlin with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, to make progress in the peace process by September. She said that "when it comes to the question of recognizing a Palestinian State, I repeat again that Germany is working for there to be a two-State solution", and added that "unilateral recognitions therefore definitely do not contribute to achieving this aim... This is our stance now and it will be our stance in September... There needs to be mutual recognition, otherwise it is not a two-State solution". Prime Minister Netanyahu said at the same press conference that the issues of settlements should not hinder a final peace solution with the Palestinians. He added that any breakthrough would take a "good amount of time discussing outstanding issues". (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post*)

The World Bank published a report for the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLIC) meeting in Brussels, which will be held on 13 April. The report, titled "Macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza: seventh review of progress", examines two key areas critical to the functioning of a Palestinian State: the strength of PA institutions and the prospects for sustainable Palestinian economic growth. (www.worldbank.org)

Gaza crossings liaison officer Raed Fattouh said that his office had received news that the Kerem Shalom goods crossing would be closed for the next two days. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an open letter to Judge Goldstone published in the *Guardian*, Palestinian human rights organizations said that they were surprised by his comments and found his amended understanding of "Operation Cast Lead", based on evidence provided by Israeli military investigations, troubling. They vowed to continue to call upon the international community to move the legal process forward. (*The Guardian*)

The European Network to support the rights of Palestinian prisoners announced a campaign of solidarity with detainee Kifah Qutaish after her detention was extended by Israeli authorities "administratively" for the third consecutive time. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

In a statement, [Kairos Palestine](#) said, "For Christians, Holy Week in Jerusalem has a special spiritual connection", as Christian Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza awaited news on permits from Israel to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem. The group called for respect for freedom of worship, unfettered access to holy sites and an overhaul of Israel's permit system. It also condemned the granting of access to Jerusalem to Jews rather than to Christians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

8

Israeli forces hit the Gaza Strip, killing a mother and child, and an elderly man, in two separate strikes near Khan Younis. Ten had been killed since the afternoon of 7 April. Another strike hit the Rafah tunnels area but none was reported injured. A statement from Israel's military confirmed the attacks and acknowledged civilian casualties, adding that the military "regrets that the Hamas terrorist organization chooses to operate from within its civilian population, using it as a 'human shield'". (*Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz*)

IAF craft attacked a rocket-launching cell in the Gaza Strip. The military wing of Hamas said that its 27-year-old commander and an additional gunman had been killed. (*Ynetnews*)

An Israeli shell hit Palestinian teenagers playing in Shajaiyeh, in the northern Gaza Strip, killing two and wounding 10 others. (*Wafa*)

The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees said that it could not commit to a ceasefire deal with Israel, some 12 hours after Hamas officials announced that a ceasefire was coming into effect. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, made the following statement: "I strongly condemn yesterday's mortar and rocket attacks out of the Gaza Strip, which once again hit the innocent civilian population and which must stop immediately. I am deeply concerned by the current escalation of violence. I also deplore the loss of civilian life in Gaza and call on Israel to show restraint. The lives of civilians must be spared everywhere and in all circumstances. Only an immediate cessation of all violence can bring back the calm necessary to allow for a lasting truce in the Gaza Strip." (www.consilium.europa.eu)

The Spokesperson for the Secretary-General issued the following statement on the violence in Gaza and southern Israel:

The Secretary-General is concerned at escalating violence in Gaza and southern Israel. He has condemned the recent rocket fire from Palestinian militants which hit a school bus and injured two Israeli civilians. He calls for an immediate end to rocket fire. The Secretary-General is also concerned at reports of civilian casualties from Israeli operations in Gaza and calls for maximum restraint. He urges respect for international humanitarian law and calls for de-escalation and calm to prevent any further bloodshed. (www.un.org)

During a meeting with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the United Nations in New York, Israeli President Shimon Peres asked Mr. Ban to publicly retract the Goldstone report. (*Ynetnews*)

9

An Israeli drone fired a missile at a car in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, killing two of its occupants and critically wounding a third. Hamas identified the three as members of its military wing. A missile also hit a group of Palestinians in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza, killing one person and injuring two others. A missile fired from an Israeli drone targeting the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City killed a 30-year-old member of the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees and injured four people, two critically. Israeli officials said the military had launched a series of strikes against targets in northern Gaza after the air force had identified a "squad of terrorists who had just fired missiles" into the Negev.

(*Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

Twenty-five mortar shells exploded in open areas in southern Israel, one of which damaged a building. Three Grad rockets also exploded in southern Israel, one near a school fence, causing minor damage. Islamic Jihad's military wing claimed responsibility for the firing of the Grad rockets. (*Ynetnews*)

More than 50 settlers from "Yitzhar" attacked residents and set fire to a car in the village of Asira, south of Nablus. (*Wafa*)

10

The Israeli navy opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats near the Khan Yunis port in the southern Gaza Strip. Damage was reported but no injuries. (*IMEMC*)

Three rockets hit open areas in southern Israel without causing injuries or damage. More than 120 rockets and mortar shells were fired at southern Israel over the weekend. (*Haaretz, Ynetnews*)

A Palestinian official close to UN- and Egyptian-mediated negotiations said, "Palestinian factions have agreed to halt rocket fire and Israel agreed to cease attacks on the Gaza Strip". There was no official confirmation from either side. (*Reuters*)

The League of Arab States called on the United Nations to impose a no-fly zone over Gaza and lift an Israeli siege of the territory. The death toll since Israel launched retaliation for an attack on a school bus that critically wounded a teenager on 7 April had climbed to 19 Palestinian militants and civilians. Condemning what it called Israel's "brutal" aggression in Gaza, a gathering of the League's permanent delegates, chaired by Oman, called on the UN to convene a session of the Security Council. The meeting would "consider the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip, on an urgent basis, to stop its siege and impose a no-fly rule on the Israeli military to protect civilians in the Gaza Strip," the League said in a statement. (*Reuters*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair said in an interview with *CNN*: "the only way forward in the peace process is to accept that we need to move towards a Palestinian State that is properly and securely governed; that's a viable State. That is also the best security for Israel." (*AFP, Wafa*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that 25.7 per cent of Palestinians (including 18.3 per cent in the West Bank and 38.0 per cent in the Gaza Strip) were living below the poverty line. (*Wafa*, www.pcbs.gov.ps)

Israeli soldiers raided the village of Awarta, east of Nablus, and arrested nine Palestinians, including two women. Soldiers also arrested five other Palestinians in other parts of the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

The Ramallah-based rights group Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association issued a statement calling for international observers and intervention over the mass arrests by Israeli forces in Awarta, stating that the arrests took place "despite the fact that no evidence has been brought forth to indicate that the [Fogel] murders are related to Awarta, suggesting a campaign of collective punishment against the village". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

11

Israeli forces uprooted and seized 19 olive trees in Salfit in the northern West Bank. (*Wafa*)

IDF sources predicted that the current ceasefire between Israel and Hamas would be limited in time. "We succeeded in postponing a large-scale conflict with Hamas but that conflict is likely inevitable", one senior officer said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli Defense officials said that Egypt had halted, after the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak, the construction of an underground steel wall designed to stop weapons smuggling along its border with Gaza. (*UPI*)

PA Minister for Planning and Development, Ali al-Jerbawi, announced the Government's "readiness to establish an independent Palestinian State during September". A report outlining the status of preparations for statehood and the success of the plan thus far would be presented to a meeting of the AHLC in Brussels on 13 April. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that a truce with Hamas was "a grave error; the objective must be to force Hamas out of power". (*IMEMC*)

The Vice President of the Oil and Gas Station Owners Union said that a fuel crisis was looming in Gaza after an 11-day fuel supply cut due to the closure of the crossings into the Gaza Strip by Israeli forces. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli military forces demolished a well designed to collect rain water and an agricultural structure in Al-Khader village, southwest of Bethlehem. (*IMEMC*)

Settlers attacked Palestinian shops in Hebron and burned their property. (*Wafa*)

Due to pressure from the Prime Minister's office, Interior Minister Eli Yishai of Israel instructed the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee to postpone discussion on new settlement construction until after the Passover holiday. Consequently, discussion on the project to build 980 housing units in "Har Homa" and 600 in "Pisgat Ze'ev", which were supposed to take place during the week, would not take place until 5 May. (*Haaretz*)

Six former Shin Bet, Mossad, and army officials held a press conference in support of a deal for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Former Shin Bet chief Yaakov Peri called for a "dramatic acceleration" of negotiations, adding: "I know that the State of Israel has never set any red lines or a framework regarding captive and missing soldiers." (*Ynetnews*)

According to PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqe, 7,000 Palestinian prisoners participated in a hunger strike protesting poor prison conditions. Protesters also gathered in several West Bank and Gaza cities in advance of Palestinian Prisoners' Day, marked annually on 17 April. (*IMEMC*)

The Director of the Hurriyat prisoner aid group, Helmi al-A'raj, said that Israel had imposed a series of new punitive measures on Palestinian prisoners in "Ofer" prison, south of Ramallah, including suspending newspaper supply to the prison, reducing the number of accessible TV stations, and threatening to impose collective punishments in case one of the prisoners violated the new orders. (*Wafa*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu urged European ambassadors in Jerusalem to prevent European nationals from taking part in a flotilla scheduled to depart for Gaza in late May. (*Haaretz*)

12

Israeli military forces detained eight Palestinians and delivered summonses to two more in Jenin. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

Four Palestinians died and at least five were injured when a Gaza smuggling tunnel collapsed. (*AFP*)

Crown Prince Philip of Spain and his wife arrived for an official visit in Ramallah where they met with PA President Abbas. (*Wafa*)

The Obama Administration reportedly blocked an initiative by Britain, France and Germany to restart Israeli-Palestinian talks by proposing the outlines of a final settlement to the conflict. The Administration believed that a Quartet meeting would not be useful in getting the talks restarted as "it wasn't the right time". (*AP, Haaretz*)

At the US-Islamic World Forum in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that the status quo between the Israelis and Palestinians was unsustainable, pledging Washington's "active" leadership in solving the conflict. She said that President Obama would, in the coming weeks, lay out in detail American policy towards a changing Middle East. She said that the United States remained determined to move forward on talks between Israel and the Palestinians. (*AFP*)

During the meeting between PA President Abbas and Crown Prince Philip of Spain, who was in Ramallah on an official visit, the Prince reiterated "Spain's position in support of the peace process and the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State alongside Israel". Mr. Abbas said: "The bases of peace are clear: land in exchange for peace; two-State solution and the establishment of the Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem." (*Wafa, Xinhua*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu was reportedly weighing a withdrawal of IDF troops from the West Bank and a series of other measures to prevent a "diplomatic tsunami" that might follow the international recognition of a Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders, at the UN General Assembly in September. (*Haaretz, IMEMC*)

The report of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) to the AHLC, the donor coordination group for the Palestinian territories, on progress in building Palestinian institutions, [assessed](#) that “in six areas where the UN is most engaged, government functions are now sufficient for a functioning Government of a State”. (www.unsco.org)

The World Bank approved a grant of \$3 million to the Gaza Coastal Municipalities Water Utility to fund cost overruns in the implementation of a \$31 million project to improve water and sanitation services. (www.worldbank.org)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [reported](#) a 400 per cent increase in olive oil production in 2010 compared to 2009. (Wafa, www.pcbs.gov.ps)

A West Bank villager said that settlers cut down his olive trees, and the Civil Administration of Israel confirmed the details. The founder of the settlement outpost “Havat Gilad” however said that the trees belonged to him. (Ynetnews)

Red Cross representatives met with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal in Damascus in an attempt to persuade Mr. Mashaal to send a new sign of life from kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit before the Passover holiday next week. (The Jerusalem Post)

More than 5,000 Al-Azhar University students demonstrated in Cairo condemning Israeli attacks on Gaza. (Ahram Online)

13

Israeli soldiers detained 14 Palestinians, including children, in areas including Nablus, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. (IMEMC)

Three Palestinians from the village of Awarta who reside in Ramallah were detained overnight by the IDF. Their relatives in the village were also detained in an overnight raid there. Concerns had been mounting among the residents of Awarta as 71 villagers, including a teenage girl and two elderly women, remained in Israeli custody without charge and official visits to ensure their well-being were prevented by Israeli forces. The IDF had been investigating the death of a settler family in nearby “Itamar”. (Ma'an News Agency)

Several Palestinian residents of Silwan in East Jerusalem were injured and one detained after clashes with the IDF. (IMEMC)

The Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem said that it would close to traffic most of the roads leading to the Old City on 21 and 22 April for Passover. (Wafa)

During a meeting with Peter Ammon, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Saeb Erakat, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said that the PA appreciated the latest German-French-British position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He said that this position supported the two-State solution on the 1967 borders, considered settlements illegal and called upon Israel to stop settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. (Wafa)

Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN Riyad Mansour said that Britain, France, and Germany “have been working at the highest level for the acceptance of [final peace agreement] parameters to pave the way for the resumption of direct talks. It appears that Washington is not yet ready to accept this outline”. (AFP)

The Foreign Ministry of France in a [statement](#) said: “We regret the decision to postpone the Quartet meeting scheduled to take place in Berlin on April 15. We urge the Quartet to adopt, as swiftly as possible, a statement specifying the final status parameters – notably with respect to borders and security – so that, on this basis, direct negotiations can resume between the Israelis and the Palestinians.” (www.ambafrance-us.org)

Israeli Government Spokesman Ofer Gendelman issued a statement saying that the “road to an independent Palestinian State is still long”. The statement came in response to a series of announcements the previous day praising PA progress on building State institutions, and a UN declaration stating that, in six key areas, the PA was sufficiently able to run a State. (Ma'an News Agency)

The spokesman for PA President Abbas said that “the United States must move fast on its planned drive to revive Middle East talks before Palestinians seek recognition as a State. It is time for the American Administration to move before September”. (Haaretz)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that the UN endorsement of his administration's readiness to govern amounted to “a birth certificate” for statehood. He was speaking after an AHLC meeting in Brussels. Mr. Fayyad said that the talks in Brussels amounted to “a landmark event” after participants “effectively recognized the reality of a State of Palestine”. (AFP)

Hosted by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, the AHLC meeting opened in Brussels. The meeting was also attended by PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Quartet Representative Tony Blair. Mr. Fayyad said that international support had played a “vital role which enabled us to complete our plan to build institutions and infrastructures for the State of Palestine”. He applauded the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank for their recent reports confirming the Palestinian readiness for statehood. (Ma'an News Agency)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton [said](#) that the PA had made significant progress on its State-building agenda. “Today Palestinian institutions compare favourably with those in established States. We also welcome the new Palestinian national development plan and I pay tribute to the work of Prime Minister Fayyad.” (www.ec.europa.eu)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad will be meeting with AHLC representatives and requesting nearly \$5 billion in investment to launch a Palestinian State.

It appeared that the PA three-year development plan required \$1.467 billion in 2011, \$1.754 billion in 2012 and \$1.596 billion in 2013. “We have distributed the plan to the donors and they have welcomed it”, PA Minister for Planning and Administrative Development Ali al-Jarbawi said, adding that the plan would be presented formally to the donor countries at a pledging conference in June. (Haaretz)

A statement from the EU noted that on the sidelines of the AHLC meeting, High Representative Ashton and Prime Minister Fayyad would sign a trade agreement giving duty-free access for Palestinian products to the EU market for a period of 10 years. It would apply to all agricultural products, except fruits and vegetables, which would be subject to a duty if their prices were below a set level. (DPA, Ma'an News Agency)

The AHLC [recommended](#) that the PA seek observer status in the World Trade Organization. (www.regjeringen.no)

Peter Ammon, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, participated in the inauguration of a school in a village 6 kilometres east

of Hebron. Germany contributed € 250,000 towards the project, which was implemented by the German International Cooperation and aimed to strengthen marginalized communities. (Wafa)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton announced the signing of a deal that would open West Bank and Gaza markets to Europe. The [agreement](#) would, effective immediately, give all agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products originating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip duty free access to the EU market. (www.ec.europa.eu, Ma'an News Agency)

Israel reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza, which had been shut for seven days as a lull in cross-border fighting continued, said Amir Koren, an Israeli military spokesman. The previous day, UNRWA officials had said that 172 truckloads of oil, sugar and flour were waiting for the crossing to reopen. (Reuters)

A report by the PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs stated that Israel had arrested a total of 750,000 Palestinians since the start of the occupation in 1967. (Wafa)

Israeli negotiator Haggai Hadas, responsible for talks over the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, was said to be leaving his post. Mr. Hadas denied reports of resigning out of personal considerations and said that his two-year contract had expired. The mediator from Germany negotiating for the release of Shalit was reportedly back in the region, attempting to push forth a prisoner swap deal with Hamas. (Haaretz)

A Palestinian detainee from a village near Ramallah was forced into exile after the Israeli Government decided to deport him to Malaysia. (MEMC)

Israel was considering allowing the Freedom Flotilla 2 to reach Gaza in order to prevent an additional clash between flotilla participants and Israeli soldiers, according to a document prepared by the Foreign Ministry. (MEMC)

Ofir Gendelman, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, said that the UNSCO report to AHLC that confirmed the readiness of the Palestinian institutions for the establishment of a Palestinian State "has nothing to do with the establishment of a Palestinian State which depends on direct negotiations and finding solutions for borders, settlements and refugees' issues". (Wafa)

Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian activist and one of the founders of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, said that Israel was currently functioning under a system of apartheid. He was speaking at an event at Harvard University sponsored by the Palestine Solidarity Committee and the Harvard University Institute of Politics. Mr. Barghouti was on a tour for his new book *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*. (The Harvard Crimson)

14

The office of US House Speaker John Boehner confirmed that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu would give a Middle East peace policy speech in the US Congress in late May, in which he would lay out the principles of his Government's diplomatic and security policies. (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Prime Minister Netanyahu, speaking at a Likud Party Passover celebration, said that his Government would stand firm against any international pressure to reignite the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by accepting the unilateral conditions set by the PA. (Ynetnews)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said on the Channel 2 News Facebook page: "If we need to, we will act even more intensely than in the previous round in 'Operation Cast Lead'. As long as we don't need to [attack], we won't." (The Jerusalem Post)

Israel arrested all residents of the West Bank village of Awarta and took them to a military camp in the West Bank town of Hawara for interrogation. This was in connection with the IDF investigation into the deaths of a settler family in nearby "Itamar." (Wafa)

An 11-year-old Palestinian boy was injured after Israeli forces fired tear-gas canisters to break up clashes in the northern West Bank, onlookers said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A Hamas militant wounded last week by Israeli shelling died, bringing the death toll from a recent upsurge of violence to 19, a Gaza medical official said. (AFP)

The armed wing of Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that one of the group's fighters was killed that morning when an explosive device detonated during a "jihad mission". (Ma'an News Agency)

Imports of commercial and humanitarian goods entered Gaza for the second day in a row. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinians reported that residents of the "Adi Adi" settlement outpost attacked Palestinian farmers from the central West Bank village of Turmus Ayya. One of the farmers suffered a head injury after being hit by a club. (Ynetnews)

The Israeli Regional Construction and Planning Committee approved a new settlement plan for the construction of 900 units for settlers in the Bethlehem District. (MEMC)

A right-wing Israeli website leaked a copy of a police plan for evicting the settlement of "Beit Yonatan" in East Jerusalem's Silvan neighbourhood.

Several years ago, an Israeli court ordered the eviction of the apartment house, built without a permit, that was home to 10 families. However, the removal of the settlers had been subject to repeated delays by the Israeli authorities. (Haaretz)

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre reported that Israeli soldiers violated an Israeli High Court of Justice ruling and demolished six tin houses and barns that belonged to Bedouin residents living near Jericho. (MEMC)

Six Palestinians were detained by Israeli forces from areas across the West Bank overnight, a military statement said, claiming all were "suspects wanted for terrorist activity". The six included a Palestinian security officer. (Ma'an News Agency)

In a statement marking the anniversary of Palestine Prisoners' Day on 17 April, the Palestinian Ministry of Information urged the international community to pressure Israel to release all Palestinian prisoners. (Wafa)

The co-authors of the Goldstone report today said that they stood by their work. In a [statement](#) published on the website of the Guardian, Mr. Goldstone's three colleagues said that there was "no justification" for any move to review or rescind the report, which among other things accused Israel of deliberately targeting civilians in its campaign against Hamas militants. (AP, The Guardian)

The US Senate unanimously approved a [resolution](#) calling upon the UN Human Rights Council "to reflect the author's repudiation of the

Goldstone report's central findings, rescind the report and reconsider further Council actions with respect to the report's findings". (*The Jerusalem Post*)

In response to a request from Israel to help stop activists sailing to Gaza on the first anniversary of the Gaza aid flotilla, Turkish authorities said that the flotilla plan was "not Ankara's concern". (*Ynetnews*)

The participation of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in Toronto's annual Pride Parade does not violate the city's anti-discrimination policy, Toronto's city manager concluded, but Mayor Rob Ford's administration was intent on refusing the parade city funding if the controversial group marched. (*The National Post, Canada*)

One of Australia's most powerful union figures distanced himself from more than 20 unions that support banning trade and cultural links with Israel. Australian Workers Union National Secretary Paul Howes said: "Creating divisions between Israeli and Palestinian workers is not a good thing." (*The Australian*)

15

Two Grad rockets landed near Ashdod causing no injuries. (*Ynetnews*)

The Ministry of Interior in Gaza reported that abducted Italian solidarity activist Vittorio Arrigoni was found dead hours after being kidnapped by radical Salafist Islamists. Hamas "condemns the heinous crime that does not reflect our values, our religion or our customs and traditions", a statement from the Ministry said, vowing to hunt down those responsible. (*Ma'an News Agency, The New York Times*)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that donors have "welcomed" his development plan, which would be officially presented to donor countries at a pledging conference in June. *Reuters* reported that the PA's three-year development plan would require \$1.467 billion in 2011, \$1.754 billion in 2012 and \$1.596 billion for 2013. (*Haaretz, Reuters*)

Former Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert, in an op-ed article in *the Jerusalem Post*, said that Judge Goldstone's "reconsideration" of key charges against Israel in his report was "too little and too late". (*The Jerusalem Post*)

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

The Secretary-General deplores the abduction and murder of Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian citizen, in the Gaza Strip, and extends his condolences to his family. This crime was committed against a person who lived and worked among the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Secretary-General calls for the perpetrators of this appalling crime to be brought to justice as soon as possible. (*UN News Centre*)

16

Israel bombed two Hamas training bases near Gaza City, causing serious damage to the bases and the houses around them but no reported injuries. (*Wafa*)

The 16-year-old critically wounded by a rocket fired at an Israeli school bus from Gaza earlier this month died. (*Haaretz*)

17

Shin Bet announced that two Palestinians from the village of Awarta, aged 18 and 19, were arrested on suspicion of killing five members of the Fogel family in the "Itamar" settlement and had confessed. Both were said to be members of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine but acting independently. Six additional Awarta residents had been arrested on suspicion of hiding the weapon and other evidence. (*CNN, Haaretz*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting that his upcoming speech to the US Congress would be an "opportunity to present political and security principles". *Yediot Ahronot* had revealed a plan according to which Israeli forces would redeploy and give the Palestinians control of Areas B and C, which would become part of Area A. Mr. Netanyahu would decide which settlements to keep and which areas to pass on to the Palestinians. However, major areas were to be kept under full Israeli control for "security reasons". (*Gulf News, Ynetnews*)

PA President Abbas said that no peace deal could be reached with Israel until all political prisoners were released. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu appointed senior Mossad official David Meidan as the new Israeli negotiator in prisoner swap talks, following the resignation of Hagai Hadas. (*Haaretz*)

On the occasion of Palestinian Prisoners' Day, UN Deputy Special Coordinator Maxwell Gaylard called for protection of the rights of Palestinians in Israeli detention, particularly women and children. He stressed that regardless of the causes of detention, the rule of law must be applied. (*UNSCO*)

Qadura Fares, head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, said that the prisoners in 23 Israeli prisons and detention camps had participated in a one-day hunger strike against a political split that divides Fatah and Hamas, and against Israeli measures. (*www.arabnews.com*)

Israel's military court remanded non-violent anti-wall protest organizer Bassem Tamimi in custody for the duration of his legal proceedings, his lawyer said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

18

Six Palestinians, from Hebron, Bethlehem, Nablus and Ramallah, were arrested by Israeli soldiers and taken for interrogation to detention centres under the claim that they were "wanted". (*IMEMC*)

The Hamas Ministry of Interior published the pictures of three suspects wanted for their alleged role in the killing of Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni and offered a cash prize for information that would lead to arrests. (*Wafa, Ynetnews*)

Hundreds of Palestinians marched in a procession honouring Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni. (*Ynetnews*)

Ahead of Passover celebrations, Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered a strict closure of crossings into Israel from the West Bank starting 24 April at midnight and lasting until 26 April. (*IMEMC*)

Hamas authorities said that they were searching for three suspects in last week's killing of Italian peace activist Vittorio Arrigoni in the Gaza Strip, adding that they believed they were close to finding the killers. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

A Qassam rocket fired from northern Gaza exploded in an open area near a kibbutz. (*Ynetnews*)

An Israeli army force arrested a 16-year-old boy from the village of Awarta. (*Wafa*)

The percentage of Palestinians who believe that Gaza rockets were useful in achieving national goals decreased from 55.4 per cent in January

2009 to 37.3 per cent in April 2011, a poll by the Ramallah-based Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre revealed. (*Haaretz*)

A senior Fatah official, who did not wish to be named, told *Gulf News* that a unilateral Israeli plan was not acceptable to the Palestinians who were not seeking partial solutions to their cause. He said that Palestinians would never recognize any such plan while they followed unchanged their plan of approaching the General Assembly demanding recognition of a Palestinian State. (*Gulf News*)

Palestinian factions had been presented with a Turkish initiative recommending legislative elections first, a proposal revealed by Azzam Al-Ahmed, the Fatah official entrusted with the dialogue with Hamas. Hamas Spokesman Taher Nunu commented on the idea, saying that it was possible as a step on the road to reconciliation, and that elections should be done "in order not to enter into the process of forming a Government that ends up not being recognized, repeating the same cycle". (*Ahram Online*)

US Congresswoman Kay Granger warned that the US could reduce aid to the Palestinians if they pursued statehood at the UN. Rep. Granger, Chair of the House Appropriations subcommittee overseeing foreign aid, told *the Jerusalem Post*: "It also could affect our funding at the UN." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahhar warned that "the occupation must understand that all its attempts over the last five years have failed when faced with the patience of Hamas and the Palestinian people", and the prisoner exchange deal would go forward only according to terms set by Hamas. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

All Israel-Gaza crossing terminals were closed ahead of Passover celebrations. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

19

Two suspects in the murder of Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni were killed and another sustained injuries in a raid by Hamas security forces in Gaza City, Hamas officials reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A group of settlers raided Burin, a Palestinian village south of Nablus, injuring four Palestinians, including a journalist. (*Wafa*)

Foreign Minister Nabil Elaraby of Egypt accepted the invitation of the PA to visit the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an interview with *AP*, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN Riyad Mansour said that if a peace treaty with Israel was not reached by September, the PA's first choice would be to go to the UN Security Council, with support and arguments strong enough to recommend admission of Palestine as a new member of the United Nations. September looms large for the Palestinians because "there are so many things that will converge". First, Israel and the Palestinians agreed on US President Obama's target of September 2011 for a peace agreement, a date endorsed by the European Union and much of the world. Second, the two-year programme to build the infrastructure of a Palestinian State would be complete, and third, the Palestinians hope two-thirds of the 192 UN Member States would recognize Palestine as an independent State, Ambassador Mansour said. (*AP*)

In an interview to *AFP*, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu confirmed that he was working on the details of a proposal to break the deadlock in the peace talks, which he would outline in his planned speech before the US Congress in late May. (*AFP*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

During his [daily briefing](#), US State Department Spokesman Mark Toner said, regarding Palestinian plans to seek unilateral recognition for an independent State at the General Assembly without reaching a peace accord with Israel: "We don't believe it's a good idea; we don't believe it's helpful." (www.state.gov)

At the meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, [said](#) that the Palestinians were ready, willing and would prefer to reach a peace treaty with Israel by September. (*UN press release GA/PAL/1195*)

Fatah reconciliation delegation head Azzam Al-Ahmad said that his party would "keep the door open" for Hamas to sign a unity deal despite the announcement expected the following week of a new PA Cabinet upon the return of President Abbas from Paris. He said that President Abbas had also sought support from Turkey, whose Foreign Minister had promised to accompany him to Gaza in the case of an agreement. He added that Turkey "proposed holding elections for the Palestine National Council and postponing the parliamentary and presidential elections". Mr. Al-Ahmad said that Fatah had rejected the offer "since the elections have to be comprehensive". Officials in Turkey had also proposed a meeting between Mr. Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal in Istanbul, but the latter's calls to cancel scheduled presidential and legislative elections prompted President Abbas to reject the meeting. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.arabnews.com).

Member of the Hamas Political Bureau Izzat al-Rishq stated that Hamas had agreed to accept an offer to participate in the Palestinian reconciliation and national unity talks to be hosted by one of the Arab nations, adding that Hamas never stopped seeking unity, and was interested in achieving unity and reconciliation in order to end the current situation. (*IMEMC*)

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee member Hanan Ashrawi said: "The position of the PLO Executive Committee remains clear. There will be no negotiations without a cessation of all settlement activities, without clear terms of reference in conformity with international law and without a binding time line." (*Wafa*)

EU Representative Christian Berger and PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad signed a €21 million agreement to support the PA institution-building agenda. The funds would mainly support justice institutions such as the High Judicial Council and the Palestinian Monetary Authority. (www.reliefweb.int)

The mother of Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni, who was killed in Gaza on 15 April, said that she would be sailing to Gaza in May with the Gaza aid flotilla. (*IMEMC*)

Palestinian medical sources in Iraq-Burin village, near northern Nablus, reported that a Palestinian was shot and wounded after a group of Israeli settlers attacked the village and broke into the victim's home. (*IMEMC*)

Three journalists were injured when Israeli soldiers and settlers attacked them in the village of Burin near Nablus, the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate said on 20 April. (*Turkish Weekly*)

Taking note of the "grave financial situation" of UNRWA, the General Assembly requested Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to continue to support the Agency's institutional strengthening through the provision of financial resources from the United Nations regular budget. The Assembly

adopted a resolution reiterating that UNRWA's critical financial situation was caused in part by structural underfunding, as well as rising expenditures resulting from the deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in the region. (*UN News Centre*)

20

PA President Abbas told reporters in Tunisia that he was opposed to another armed uprising against Israel, even if peace efforts failed later this year, adding that he remained committed to the target of reaching a negotiated peace agreement with Israel by September. Mr. Abbas, however, repeated his plan to unilaterally seek UN endorsement of Palestinian independence in the absence of a deal. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas would be traveling to Paris to seek advice and support from European leaders on Palestinian plans to seek recognition for a Palestinian State later this year. (*The Egyptian Gazette*)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged Israel and the Palestinians to resume dialogue immediately even as unrest roils the region. The two parties "are trying to analyze what this means for their future position", Mrs. Clinton told *PBS* television. But "I would hope – and President Obama has said that he will continue to press both sides, which is what we believe we have to do – that everyone would realize that negotiations are the only way; but more than that, they are an immediate need". (*AFP*)

A Palestinian bid for UN recognition was a double-edged sword that would neither bring about the creation of a State nor end the conflict, a senior Israeli minister warned. In an interview, Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor said that the Palestinian strategy of avoiding negotiations in favour of achieving statehood via the UN would achieve little on the ground and only exacerbate the conflict. (*AFP*)

Izzat al Rishiq, a member of the Political Bureau of Hamas, said that the movement had agreed to the Arab offer to host and mediate Palestinian reconciliation and national unity talks. He said that first, the offer must be presented to President Abbas. A national unity agreement, he added, must include an agenda that ensures resistance and survival and that would end the security coordination between the PA and Israel.

(*IMEMC*)

At the opening of an international conference in Bil'in village, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called on the international community to safeguard Palestinian non-violent resistance, demanding action on the March arrests of Bassem and Naji Tamimi, leading figures in the An Nabi Saleh popular committee that spearheaded local protests. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Defence for Children International-Palestine Section said that Israeli occupation forces targeted children during confrontations with Palestinians, saying that 90 per cent of detainees were children under the age of 18. Detained children had been subjected to torture in various forms. The organization's Legal Unit Coordinator, Iyad Misk, said: "Every year, the Israelis put around 700 children from the West Bank on trial in military courts." (www.dci-pal.org)

According to *Foreign Policy* magazine online, US Permanent Representative Susan Rice helped prevent a more thorough UN investigation into war crimes and of alleged abuses during "Operation Cast Lead". The journal cited WikiLeaks cables detailing moves by the US to remove recommendations for a wider investigation from the report by a board of inquiry set up to investigate attacks on UN sites in Gaza. (*AFP*, *Ma'an News Agency*, www.foreignpolicy.com)

In a signed document, a group of 17 Israeli intellectuals announced a campaign to support the declaration of a Palestinian State along 1967 borders. The document stated that "the total end of the occupation" was fundamental for the liberation of both the Palestinian and the Jewish people. (*DPA*)

The Gaza Strip was not experiencing a humanitarian crisis, the IDF quoted a Red Cross official as saying. According to the IDF, Mathilde Redmatn, Deputy Director of the Red Cross in the Gaza Strip, said that there "is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza", adding: "If you go to the supermarket, there are products. There are restaurants and a nice beach." (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian youths and Israeli forces clashed in East Jerusalem, residents said. Israeli forces had been protecting settlers touring the Silwan area when the clashes broke out, said locals, who called the visit provocative. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Five hundred people wearing white shirts gathered on the hills facing the West Bank settlement of "Itamar" to establish a new settlement named "Regev". (*Haaretz*)

A boat carrying pro-Palestinian activists sailed along the Gaza Strip in order to "document Israeli aggression towards Gaza fishermen". One of the activists said that they had no intention of sailing outside the known fishing borders. (*Ynetnews*)

The *BBC* declared that its documentary on the Gaza flotilla incident screened last year overall was "accurate" and "impartial", after an investigation following complaints from critics of Israel who claimed it had been biased. Using previously unseen video footage from the IDF and confiscated passenger tapes, the programme concluded that the main aim of the activists had not been to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, but rather to orchestrate a political act designed to put pressure on Israel and the international community. Critics had been furious that the programme had not been as hostile to Israel as they thought it should have been and had joined activists from the Free Gaza Movement in demonstrations outside London headquarters of the BBC. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *BBC*)

Members of the pro-Palestinian International Solidarity Movement resumed their activities in Gaza days after the murder of Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian activist from the group. (*AFP*)

The PA called on the Israeli branch of Japanese automaker Subaru to take action after an apparent parody advertisement showed one of its cars hitting Palestinian youths. The supposed advertisement, which appeared on several websites, showed a well-known picture of an Israeli settler leader, in his Subaru vehicle, running over stone-throwing boys in East Jerusalem the previous year. Imposed over the scene was the Hebrew slogan: "See who will stand in your way..." (*AFP*)

21

Several Israeli tanks crossed Gaza's border, entering Gaza City's industrial zone and demolishing a number of factories, all of which had been closed since 2005. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces surrounded a secondary school for boys in Hebron's city centre and then entered the building while deploying sound grenades, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Australian citizen was arrested by Israeli authorities on charges that he was a spy for Hamas. (*The Australian*)

President of France Nicolas Sarkozy hosted PA President Abbas in Paris as Europe reflected more and more openly on the prospect of recognizing an independent Palestine. (*AFP*)

An invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu from the Republican Party to address Congress next month is highlighting the tensions between President Obama and Mr. Netanyahu and has kicked off a bizarre diplomatic race over who will be the first to lay out a new proposal to reopen the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. (*The New York Times*)

In an editorial in *the New York Times*, President of Turkey Abdullah Gul writes: "The plight of the Palestinians has been a root cause of unrest and conflict in the region and is being used as a pretext for extremism in other corners of the world... I call upon the leaders of Israel to approach the peace process with a strategic mindset, rather than resorting to short-sighted tactical manoeuvres... A dignified and viable Palestine, living side by side with Israel, will not diminish the security of Israel, but fortify it. Turkey thinks strategically about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, not only because it knows that a peaceful Middle East would be to its benefit, but also because it believes that Israeli-Palestinian peace would benefit the rest of the world." (*The New York Times*)

US and European diplomats warned Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that the Quartet may endorse a Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, should Mr. Netanyahu fail to provide a peace plan. (*Gulf News*)

In a meeting with a Parliamentary delegation from Paraguay, Fatah Commissioner for International Relations Nabil Sha'ath held Israel responsible for the failure of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces bulldozed several industrial facilities and warehouses in Gaza in the industrial zone near the Karni crossing. (*Wafa*)

The PLO denounced indications that Israel would confiscate 27 Palestinian homes and expel their residents from Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The PLO urged the Quartet to immediately intervene in order to prevent Israel from committing "this racist and terrorist act". It also requested an urgent Security Council session. The strong reaction from the PLO followed reports that an extremist settler organization had the previous day handed eviction notices to 10 Jerusalem families in Sheikh Jarrah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Senior Fatah official Nabil Sha'ath announced that Fatah planned to take part in the international Gaza-bound flotilla scheduled to set sail in May. (*Ynetnews*)

A special screening of an allegedly anti-Israel Turkish film was scheduled to take place in Cairo under the auspices of the ambassador from Turkey on 23 April. "Valley of the Wolves – Palestine" tells the story of the IDF raid on the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara last May and had already prompted massive criticism in Israel. (*Ynetnews*)

The PLO Department of International Relations condemned the US Senate's resolution the previous week calling on the UN to rescind the Goldstone report. (*Palestine News Network*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club said in a press release that Israeli authorities, without any legal grounds, had refused to release Palestinian prisoner Hasan al-Zawaraa who was supposed to be released on 17 April. (*Wafa*)

The PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs reported that the Nafha prison administration had isolated a Palestinian prisoner in a solitary cell following his demands to be treated as a "prisoner of war". (*Wafa*)

UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake issued a [statement](#) on the situation of children in the Middle East and North Africa, saying: "UNICEF is greatly concerned about the effects of violence on children caught in escalating conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. We continue to condemn the targeting of civilians by armed groups, and call on all parties to provide humanitarian aid workers with immediate access to all areas and children in need... In Southern Israel, rocket attacks from Gaza continue to affect children. This week, a 16-year-old Israeli boy died from injuries after a rocket hit a school bus. In the occupied Palestinian territory, since the beginning of the year, more than 8 Palestinian children have been killed and at least 48 injured both by Israeli security forces and by Palestinian armed groups." (www.unicef.org)

Martin Indyk, former US Ambassador to Israel and Adviser to US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell, said that if no changes were made between now and September, the UN would declare a Palestinian State. Mr. Indyk told *Israel Army Radio* that "unless the US, Israel and the Palestinians have an alternative... then in September there will be a vote in the UN that will recognize a Palestinian State, just like the UN recognized Israel in 1948". (*The Jerusalem Post, Israel Army Radio*)

Leading left-wing cultural leaders, including 17 Israel Prize laureates, were verbally accosted today during a rally in support of an independent Palestinian State. The rally, taking place outside Tel Aviv's Independence Hall, was reportedly disrupted by right-wing activists equipped with bullhorns, who called out: "leftist professors, it will all blow up in your face", "Kahane was right", and "traitors". Rally organizers and participants said police forces who were present did not separate rally goers from objectors, as they usually do during right-wing events. (*Haaretz*)

22

Four Palestinians were arrested and 16 were injured during an Israeli military raid on the weekly anti-wall protests held in Bil'in, Nîlin and al-Nabi Saleh in the central West Bank and the village of al-Ma'sara, in the south. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli President Shimon Peres said that Israel needed to present its own initiative for peace in the region in order to avoid being obliged to accept a deal presented by other countries. Urging Prime Minister Netanyahu to act, he said: "If we don't want foreign plans, the best way would be a plan of our own, and if we do that, others won't go ahead with theirs." (*IMEMC*)

Five Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy, were stoned by settlers in the Nablus area. Settlers also reportedly torched one car and broke the windshield of another. (*Ma'an News Agency, IMEMC*)

A Palestinian school bus heading from Hebron to Nablus on a field trip was attacked by settlers. Most of the bus's windows were smashed and a student was injured. (*Wafa*)

A group of settlers attacked a mine pit south of Nablus, assaulting workers and destroying some equipment. (*Wafa*)

23

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club appealed to international and national human rights organizations to intervene and save the life of Palestinian prisoner Abbed Beni-Odeh, 28, in Shata prison. Mr. Beni-Odeh reportedly was in need of urgent medical care which the prison administration was denying him. The Palestinian Prisoners' Club reported that the Israeli prison administration was depriving prisoners of visits, holding them in solitary confinement and not allowing them to go out to the prison yard as a part of the administration's mass punishment policy in response to prisoners' demands for improved detention conditions. (*Wafa*)

Friends of Humanity International issued a report on the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in 2010. It identified a total of 6,600 prisoners in 2010, including 35 women, 9 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and 270 children under the age of 18. Some 820 prisoners, including 5 women, had been sentenced to life imprisonment. It also reported more than 130 cases of brutal treatment and

humiliation by prison administrations. (Wafa)

24

Israeli forces raided the villages of Beit Ummar, Yatta and Dhahriya near Hebron. There were no reports of arrests. (Wafa)

One settler, Ben Yosef Livnat, was shot and killed, and four others were wounded while visiting Joseph's Tomb near Nablus without the required security coordination with the Palestinian side. The killed settler was the nephew of Culture and Sport Minister Limor Livnat. (MEMC)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the killing of Ben Yosef Livnat and demanded that the PA "take serious steps against the terrorists who committed this criminal act against Jewish worshippers on their way to pray". Defense Minister Ehud Barak also strongly condemned the incident saying that no lack of security coordination could justify opening fire at innocent people. (The Jerusalem Post)

25

According to local sources, two Palestinian children, aged 15 and 16, were arrested by Israeli soldiers during a raid in Jayyus, a town east of Qalqilya. (Wafa)

In an interview with *Al-Hayat* newspaper, PLO Secretary-General Yasser Abed Rabbo said that the PA would defer its attempts to unilaterally declare a Palestinian State at the UN if "real and serious" negotiations with Israel had begun, adding that any negotiated agreement must be according to "the 1967 borders, very limited exchange of land, and no exchanges of populations". (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Der Spiegel reported that German Chancellor Angela Merkel intended to convince PA President Abbas during his upcoming visit to Berlin on 5 May to cancel the plan for declaring statehood at the UN in September of this year. Ms. Merkel said that her stance, and the stance of Germany, was that such a declaration was "hasty and bad". (MEMC)

Jihad al-Wazir, Governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA), said that the PMA was getting ready to announce the establishment of a Palestinian central bank that would have the power to issue a Palestinian currency. (Wafa)

A group of settlers attacked a number of Palestinian homes near the "Kiryat Arba" settlement in the southern part of the West Bank. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas posthumously honoured Juliano Mer-Khamis, an Israeli actor and political advocate, and Vittorio Arrigoni, Italian Palestinian rights activist, with the Medal of Jerusalem award. (Haaretz)

International activists and Palestinian volunteers began a wheat and barley harvest in the Gaza Strip, just a kilometre from the border fence with Israel, on behalf of landowners fearing Israeli artillery and gunfire in the "no-go" zone. Several Palestinian farmers had been killed and injured in the area as they tended their land or collected crops. (Ma'an News Agency)

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Israeli forces prevented Palestinian farmers in Beit-Ulla, a town west of Hebron, from accessing their land. They also seized a bulldozer that belonged to one of the farmers. (Wafa)

Palestinian security forces fired towards Israeli military vehicles in the northern West Bank, Palestinian security sources said. There were no injuries. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Office of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he would travel to Britain and France the following week to "meet with British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy and discuss diplomatic issues with them". Israeli media said that Mr. Netanyahu would try to convince them not to recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian State. (AFP)

In a meeting with Yasser Othman, Ambassador from Egypt to the PA, PA President Abbas said, "Egypt is the backbone of our people's aspirations toward having an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital." (The Jerusalem Post)

The Palestinian town of Beit Ummar, in the southern West Bank, was flooded with sewage from a nearby settlement, according to local eyewitnesses and officials. Locals say that there was evidence that the sewage had been dumped on purpose by Israeli settlers. (MEMC)

A Hamas delegation travelled to Cairo to discuss reconciliation with Fatah and the release of Gilad Shalit. (The Jerusalem Post)

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk will visit Egypt and Jordan from 25 April to 3 May. He will meet officials, human rights defenders, UN agencies and civil society organizations working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Government of Israel had not responded to repeated requests from the Special Rapporteur for access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Due to the prevailing security situation in Gaza, the Special Rapporteur had been forced to cancel his visit to Gaza as part of this mission. He plans to visit Gaza later in the year. (www.ohchr.org)

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors agreed to transfer \$75 million to replenish its trust fund for West Bank and Gaza. (worldbank.org)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will convene the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Helsinki on 28 and 29 April 2011, under the theme "Mobilizing international efforts in support of the Palestinian Government's State-building programme". (UN News Centre)

Pro-Palestinian activists said they were in the final stages of organizing a sea convoy to the Gaza Strip. An international coalition of 22 non-governmental groups hope to send 15 vessels carrying up to 1,500 people. (AP)

Foreign Minister for Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu warned Israel not to interfere with plans to send a flotilla to Gaza and urged Israel "not to repeat the same mistake. It is Israel's responsibility not to implement [a blockade] against Gaza". (The Sydney Morning Herald)

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the Knesset must explain why it had stripped the rights of Israeli Arab lawmaker Hanin Zuabi after she had participated in last year's flotilla to Gaza. The Court gave the Knesset 30 days to submit an explanation. (Haaretz)

27

Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered the Gaza Strip east of Khan Yunis. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians in raids in different parts of the West Bank, according to local sources. (Wafa)

The Ambassador of Israel to the US, Michael Oren, said that the US was trying to convince its allies that a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would bring conflict, not peace. (The Jerusalem Post)

Prime Minister Netanyahu was today scheduled to meet a US Congresswoman who had said that the US would reduce aid to the PA if it went ahead with its declaration of statehood at the UN. Representative Kay Granger, a Republican from Texas and the Chair of the House Appropriations subcommittee overseeing foreign aid, was part of a visiting Congressional delegation. *(The Jerusalem Post)*

Israel National Infrastructures Minister Uzi Landau said: "If [the Palestinians declare a State], I'm going to suggest to my Government to extend our sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and over the highly populated [settlement] blocs... just to start with." *(The Jerusalem Post)*

Fatah and Hamas initialled a reconciliation agreement in Cairo where it had been negotiated with Egyptian mediation. The delegations were headed by Azzam al-Ahmad for Fatah and Moussa abu Marzouq for Hamas. The agreement provides for the establishment of a government of technocrats that would prepare for parliamentary and presidential elections in a year and work for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, officials on both sides said. The accord also calls for elections to the Palestine National Council and the formation of a joint security committee. The Quartet conditions were not part of the agreement, Mr. Abu Marzouq said. Hamas and Fatah would meet within a week to formally sign a reconciliation agreement, a member of the Hamas negotiating team said. *(Ma'an News Agency, The Washington Post)*

"The Palestinian Authority must choose between peace with Israel or peace with Hamas", Prime Minister Netanyahu said in televised remarks. "Peace with both of them is impossible because Hamas aspires to destroy the State of Israel and says so openly." "With this accord, a red line has been crossed", Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said. "We have at our disposal a vast arsenal of measures including the lifting of VIP status for Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] and Salam Fayyad, which will not allow them to move freely", he said. "We could also freeze the transfer of taxes collected by Israel for the Palestinian Authority", he added. "The move, as it stands, is a fatal mistake", President Peres said, adding that a future Palestinian election could lead to a "terror organization ruling both Gaza and [the West Bank] and the triumph of Hamas' policies". *(Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz, The Washington Post)*

In Washington, Tommy Vietor, Spokesman for the National Security Council, said that the Obama Administration was studying the proposed Palestinian unity agreement and seeking additional information. "As we have said before, the United States supports Palestinian reconciliation on terms which promote the cause of peace", Mr. Vietor said. "Hamas, however, is a terrorist organization which targets civilians. To play a constructive role in achieving peace, any Palestinian Government must accept the Quartet principles and renounce violence, abide by past agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist." *(The Washington Post)*

PA President Abbas invited the leadership of the Israel Peace Initiative to his headquarters in Ramallah where he would hear their presentation of the initiative, organizers said. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israeli forces detained some 40 settlers from the extremist "Hilltop Youth" movement who had entered the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, Israeli media reported. The teenagers had bypassed Israeli checkpoints before entering the area, which was under full Palestinian security control. *(Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)*

At least 10 armed settlers attacked and injured several Palestinian farmers near Salfit in the central West Bank, including an 84-year-old woman. *(IMEMC)*

Peace Now revealed that Israeli authorities were planning to build a new settlement near "Giv'at Ze'ev", south of Ramallah, which would include 600 new housing units. Peace Now said in a statement that the new plan would encircle the city of Jerusalem in the future. *(Wafa)*

Israel was currently mounting a case that the sound of the call for prayer at Jerusalem mosques was a nuisance. The Knesset was receiving suggestions to halt the "loud" calls for prayer including one concerning controlling the volumes of the mosques' loudspeakers. *(Al Arabiya)*

Prime Minister Netanyahu instructed his inner Cabinet to continue diplomatic efforts to thwart an upcoming Gaza aid flotilla. He also instructed Israel's security forces to prepare for the flotilla's possible arrival. The flotilla, which was expected to set sail in May, will now probably only embark in mid-June, its organizers preferring to wait for the outcome of the Parliament elections in Turkey. *(Haaretz)*

The delegation from Israel to the UN was scheduled today to present the Israeli version of last year's Mavi Marmara incident to the UN probe headed by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and co-chaired by former President of Colombian Alvaro Uribe, which also includes Israeli and Turkish representatives. *(The Jerusalem Post)*

A French-Palestinian woman, whose son was serving a seven-year sentence in an Israeli prison, was in France in an unsuccessful attempt to meet with the Foreign Ministry of France. An Israeli military court in 2005 had declared Salah Hamouri, 26, guilty of plotting, with members of a Palestinian group, to assassinate a rabbi. Mr. Hamouri's mother insisted that her son was innocent. *(RFI)*

28

Israeli artillery fire on an area east of the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip injured four Palestinians, including a woman and two children. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Three Palestinian teenagers were injured when Israeli soldiers fired bullets and stun grenades during clashes in Bil'in. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

An Egyptian security source said: "An Egyptian security delegation will head to Gaza to help settle and organize the internal security situation there, now that the reconciliation agreement is finally in place." He said that the security team would seek to meld the disparate security forces belonging to Palestinian factions in Gaza but declined to explain how. The deal provided for the creation of a non-factional professional security force which would be subject to scrutiny by the Palestinian legislature. *(Reuters)*

PA President Abbas said that the PLO would still be responsible for "handling politics, negotiations". He also told reporters that the unity Cabinet's makeup would soon be announced, one which he would have to approve, adding that the Government would work according to guidelines set by him. "We expect that what was achieved yesterday between Fatah and Hamas will promote negotiations", he stated. "We hope that it will bring all the factions of the Palestinians to accept the Quartet conditions." *(Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)*

Israeli Defense Minister Barak issued an official response to the announcement of Palestinian reconciliation, saying: "[There was] no chance that we will talk with this Government, if they try to create it.... Hamas is a murderous terrorist organization that fires rockets on citizens and recently fired an anti-tank missile at a school bus of students. ... This is an organization with whom there is nothing to discuss, and therefore we will have no discourse with them". *(Haaretz)*

US State Department Spokesperson Heide Bronke-Fulton said: "The current Palestinian Government remains in place and our assistance programmes continue. ... If a new Palestinian Government is formed, we will assess it based on its policies at that time and will determine the implications for our assistance based on US law." *(Reuters)*

House Appropriations subcommittee Chair Republican Kay Granger and senior Democrat Nita Lowey wrote a letter to PA President Abbas, saying: "Our ability to support current and future aid would be severely threatened if you abandon direct negotiations with Israel and continue with your current efforts." Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the Republican Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said: "US taxpayer funds should not

and must not be used to support those who threaten US security, our interests and our vital ally, Israel.” (Reuters)

The forum of seven senior Israeli Ministers decided it would not hold peace talks with a joint Fatah-Hamas Government. (Ynetnews)

"We have consistently called for reconciliation and peace under the authority of President Abbas as a way to end the division between the West Bank and Gaza and we have also consistently underlined the need for security and stability across the region", said Michael Mann, Spokesman for EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton. "Now we have to study the details of the agreement and with that in mind, [Ms. Ashton] will be talking to partners both within the EU and region within the course of today", he added. (Haaretz)

"We have heard of this important step with great satisfaction", a Russian Federation Foreign Ministry spokesman said. He said that the Russian Federation hoped that the agreement would help bring stability to the region. (DPA)

Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris and a leader of the French Socialist Party, called on France to recognize the Palestinian State on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (WAPA)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Roberterry said in a statement: "The United Nations strongly supports all efforts to progress towards reunification of Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on which progress is overdue. Reunification is essential for achieving a two-State solution that should be reached through negotiations. In this regard, Special Coordinator Serry notes with much interest the agreement recently announced between representatives of the two main Palestinian factions and the important contribution of Egypt in this regard. He hopes that reconciliation will now take place in a manner that promotes the cause of peace and will continue to follow developments closely." (www.unsco.org)

The World Bank [approved](#) a \$10 million grant to support the most poverty-stricken Palestinians, targeting about 5,500 families. "Although the Palestinian economy has been growing for the past three years, many Palestinian families are still affected by the instability of the previous decade, by a lack of economic opportunities and unemployment remains high. ... Helping these families cope with adversity is an important part of our aid strategy", said Mariam Sherman, Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza. (www.worldbank.org)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [said](#) that the unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had reached 24 per cent (including 17 per cent in the West Bank and 38 per cent in the Gaza Strip). (www.pcbs.gov.ps)

Foreign Minister of Egypt Nabil Elaraby said in an interview with *Aljazeera* that preparations were underway to open the Rafah border crossing with Gaza on a permanent basis. He said that within 7 to 10 days, steps would be taken in order to alleviate the "blockade and suffering of the Palestinian nation". The opening would allow the flow of people and goods in and out of Gaza without Israeli permission or supervision. (Haaretz)

Thousands of Israelis, escorted by the Israeli army, entered the village of Kifl Hares, in the northern West Bank, to pray at the site revered by Jews as the Tomb of Joshua. Local Palestinian residents were allowed to move freely. (Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

Israel's High Court of Justice dismissed a petition filed on behalf of 1,046 victims of "Operation Cast Lead", the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations [Seminar](#) on Assistance to the Palestinian People on "Mobilizing international efforts in support of the Palestinian Government's State-building programme" opened in Helsinki. Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Rima Khalaf delivered a message from the UN Secretary-General, while Under-Secretary of State for Development Cooperation and Development Policy Ritva Koukku-Ronde spoke on behalf of Finland, followed by Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. PA Minister for Planning and Administrative Development Ali Al-Jarbawi represented Palestine and delivered the keynote presentation. (Division for Palestinian Rights)

29

Palestinian officials said that Egypt had invited Palestinian leaders to Cairo next week for the signing of a unity agreement. The invitation from Egypt, received by factional leaders in the Gaza Strip, indicated that the three-day ceremony would start on 2 May and end with the official signing by PA President Abbas and Hamas leader-in-exile Khaled Mashaal. (Reuters)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman cautioned EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton that the recent Hamas-Fatah reconciliation could lead to a repetition of history, with Hamas taking over the West Bank just as it took over Gaza in 2007.

Mr. Liberman said, in a telephone conversation with Ms. Ashton, that if Hamas gained control of the West Bank, it would use the territory to launch rockets and perpetrate terror against the citizens of Israel. (Haaretz)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh demanded that the PLO withdraw its recognition of Israel after Israel announced its rejection of Palestinian unity.

During talks with reporters in Gaza, he said that "there is no need to recognize a country that denies the legitimate Palestinian rights". (IMEC)

During a meeting with President of Cyprus Dimitris Christofias in Nicosia, Israeli Foreign Minister Liberman said: "The international community must not legitimize the Government whose face is the face of [President Abbas] and whose arms are the arms of Hamas, who launches missiles at citizens and stains innocents with blood." (Haaretz)

The Government of South Africa issued a [statement](#) welcoming and supporting efforts by the Palestinian parties to set up a transitional unity Government. (www.dfa.gov.za)

Foreign Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb, confirmed his support for the PA political and economic reform during a meeting with PA Minister for Planning and Administrative Development Ali al-Jarbawi in Helsinki. Mr. Stubb lauded the PA's effective and successful diplomatic efforts around the world and highlighted the role of Finland as a member of the European Union in supporting the Government and mobilizing international efforts to recognize a Palestinian State in September 2011. The meeting, which was also attended by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, Riyadh Mansour, and the Palestinian Ambassador to Finland, Nabil al-Wazir, was held on the sidelines of the UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. (Ma'an News)

Agency)

Israeli authorities informed Palestinian officials that the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza would be closed for two days. (*Ma'an News Agency*) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cautiously welcomed a unity agreement aimed at ending the rivalry among ruling Palestinian factions, but stressed that it should not undermine peace efforts with Israel. In a note to correspondents, Spokesperson Martin Nesirky said: "The United Nations has long underscored the need for progress towards Palestinian unity within the framework of the Palestinian Authority led by President Abbas and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and encouraged efforts towards that end. The United Nations will study carefully the agreement as soon as the details are available. The Secretary-General welcomes efforts being made to promote Palestinian reconciliation and the important contribution of Egypt in this regard. He hopes that reconciliation will now take place in a manner that promotes the cause of peace, security and non-violence." (*Reuters, Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General*)

30

The Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank signed an agreement with the PA granting it \$120 million that will be used for development and other purposes. (*Wafa*)

The Egyptian Army Chief of Staff, General Sami Adnan, announced that the opening of the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt was a Palestinian-Egyptian matter that Israel did not have the right to interfere in, after Israeli officials had said that the opening could affect Israel's national security at a strategic level. (*Palestine News Network*)

The IDF detained a Palestinian child after raiding his house in Jerusalem. The boy had allegedly thrown stones at Israeli soldiers near the separation wall. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation should take place in a way that promotes peace, security and non-violence, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed. [Speaking](#) by telephone with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Mr. Ban discussed the recent unity deal between the two Palestinian factions and the Middle East peace process. Mr. Ban took note of Israeli concerns about the implications of the reconciliation understanding, according to information released by his spokesperson. Mr. Barak had expressed Israel's concern to Mr. Ban, telling him that "Hamas is a terrorist organization that fires rockets and missiles" at Israel. (*AFP, UN News Centre*)
