

Division for Palestinian Rights
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine**
 Monthly media monitoring review
 March 2010

Monthly highlights

- Arab League endorses indirect Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for a four-month period ([3 March](#))
- US Vice-President Biden's visit to region coincides with the approval of 1,600 new housing units in "Ramat Shlomo" settlement ([9 March](#))
- Indirect talks started, then suspended ([8 - 11 March](#))
- Top US general says Israeli-Palestinian conflict foments anti-US sentiment in Mideast ([16 March](#))
- Quartet meets in Moscow ([19 March](#))
- UN Secretary-General visits Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory ([20 March](#))
- UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held in Vienna ([24 - 25 March](#))
- UN Secretary-General calls on leaders at the Arab League Summit to support proximity talks ([27 March](#))

I

A 20-year-old member of the Popular Resistance Committees' (PRC) military wing was killed by Israeli artillery fire in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. A spokesperson for the PRC said that the man had been killed while on an "observation mission." Medical sources said that a second man had been injured by the shelling. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrested three Palestinians during overnight operations in the West Bank. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) Cabinet held its weekly session in Hebron [instead of Ramallah], to express its "total rejection" of Israel's "unjust decision" to include Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi [the Tomb of the Patriarchs], the Bilal Mosque in Bethlehem and the Old Walls of Jerusalem, on the list of its national heritage sites – a decision that "totally contradicts" international law. The PA stressed that it had raised the issue with various international parties in order to stop this "oppressive decision." PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that the Cabinet's relocation was intended to mark an official Palestinian presence in the heart of Hebron as a means to counter Israel's decision. (*www.pmo.gov.ps, Ma'an News Agency*)

India backed the Arab Peace Initiative and hoped that "dialogue will triumph over confrontation." India had a high stake in the peace and stability of the region, which was a vital part of its extended neighbourhood, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told the members of the Majlis-al-Shura, the Saudi Consultative Council. (*Press Trust of India*)

United States Senator John Kerry, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, met with PA President Mahmoud Abbas and would proceed to Israel to meet with the country's leaders. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency*)

For the first time in two months, the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza was opened. The crossing was set to remain open for three days. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The US State Department voiced concern over a reported Israeli plan to expand the "Pisgat Ze'ev" settlement in the West Bank. "We've relayed our strong concerns to the Government of Israel that this kind of activity, particularly as we try to relaunch meaningful negotiations, is counter-productive and undermines trust between the parties", said Spokesman Philip Crowley. (*AFP*)

Germany's foreign intelligence agency reached an impasse in its efforts to secure the prisoner exchange. The chief negotiator for Hamas, Mahmoud al-Zahhar, told *Der Spiegel* that he was no longer willing to take part in the talks, saying that he felt betrayed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (*Der Spiegel*)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that 2010 would witness increased efforts to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. He urged the Arab leaders that were to meet at the Arab Summit in Libya to give priority to the issue of Palestinian detainees, suggesting the establishment of a fund to cover the prisoners' needs. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a letter published in *Le Monde* newspaper, senior French diplomats called for a United Nations resolution to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and proposed sending peacekeepers. After EU States had reached an accord, in December, on a two-State solution, "a binding resolution of the UN Security Council seems necessary" now to "anchor" this agreement, the 17 former ambassadors and Middle East envoys said in an open letter to French President Nicolas Sarkozy. (*Le Monde, AFP*)

2

Israeli forces arrested four civilians in Beit Ummar, a spokesman for the Palestine Solidarity Project had reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

After meeting with the King Abdullah II of Jordan earlier this week, PA President Abbas met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak today in Sharm el-Sheikh.

"The Palestinian Authority will review indirect negotiations with Israel with the Arab States", Mr. Abbas said. (*Ynetnews, MENA, AFP*)

US Vice-President Joe Biden was due in Israel on 8 March for a three-day visit that would also include the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Haaretz*)

State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was ready to go to Moscow for the upcoming meeting of the Quartet. A UN spokesman had earlier said that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon would also take part in the Quartet meeting on 19 March. (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas said: "Reconciliation is ready, but we are still waiting for Hamas' signature on the paper". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel would not pull out of the Jordan River Valley, in the West Bank, even if there was a peace agreement with the Palestinians, Prime Minister Netanyahu told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee today. Rejecting Mr. Netanyahu's comments, PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said, "He knows that this is a non-starter for any peace agreement". (*AP*)

The European Union had made its third contribution this year to the PA payments to salaries and pensions of its civil servants, both in the Gaza Strip and the West

Bank. The contribution of €22.85 million benefited 80,608 civil servants and pensioners. The Government of Finland had contributed €2 million. (*ReliefWeb*)

Under a sea blockade, the coastal Gaza Strip has now become a seafood importer. Its desperate fishermen — cut off from plentiful fishing grounds by Israeli patrol boats — turned to sneaking into Egyptian waters in tiny motorboats to buy and bring home their catch. (*AP*)

Following a meeting with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm El-Sheikh, PA President Abbas urged delegates participating later this month in the Arab Summit to challenge Israel's designation of West Bank landmarks as "Israeli heritage sites". He said, "Negotiations with Israel [...] have become uneasy, especially in light of the ongoing Israeli settlement construction and control of Palestinian sites Israel's claim to be theirs", adding that Palestinians would not remain idle as Israel continued its violations, particularly in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where confrontations had taken place recently when extremists attempted to enter during the Purim holiday. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces enforced a closed military zone in Beit Jala near Bethlehem, as bulldozers tore up land to make way for the further construction of the separation wall, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, buckled to pressure, delaying plans for a new archaeological park that could involve the demolition of dozens of Arab homes and fuel unrest in the Holy City. The decision had come after Prime Minister Netanyahu had asked Mr. Barkat to postpone the announcement until an agreement could be reached with local residents in a bid to stave off international protests. (*AFP, Ynetnews*)

A US State Department official told reporters that the United States appreciated Prime Minister Netanyahu's intervention to delay the planned demolition of houses in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan. He urged "both parties to refrain from unilateral actions that, whether intended to or not, undermine trust and efforts to resume negotiations that will bring an end to the conflict and result in a two-State solution". (*Haaretz*)

Israeli security forces and Civil Administration monitors today dismantled a synagogue that had been built in violation of the West Bank settlement moratorium. Masked settlers hurled rocks at security forces during the operation. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

An expanded panel of 11 judges, headed by the Israeli Supreme Court President, will discuss four petitions to disqualify the Citizenship Law, which ruled out granting either Israeli citizenship or residency status to Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza Strip who marry Israeli citizens. (*Ynetnews*)

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes arrived in Gaza as part of his four-day visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. After touring the area, Mr. Holmes called for the full re-opening of the crossings and for the immediate release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. (*ReliefWeb*)

3

The IDF had arrested three Palestinians in Tulkarm, the army said. A pistol had been found in the house of one of the detainees who was said to be linked to anti-Israeli activities. (*KUNA*)

Two leaders of Saraya Al-Quds, the military wing of Islamic Jihad, had been injured and detained by Israeli forces in villages west of Jenin, according to *Ma'an News Agency*. An Israeli military spokesman said that an inquiry into the report showed that no arrests had been made or injuries caused. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces, including nine tanks and four bulldozers, entered Beit Lahia in northern Gaza, taking a post close to the town's residential area, witnesses said. (*KUNA*)

A Palestinian teenager was killed as a tunnel along the Egypt-Gaza border collapsed. (*Ma'an News Agency, IMEMC*)

The IDF cancelled a raid on the village of Qatanna near Ramallah after a soldier had posted details of the planned operation on Facebook, *Army Radio* said. (*Haaretz*)

Jamil Al-Majdalawi, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, announced that reunification talks between rival Palestinian factions on ways of overcoming obstacles to the ratification of the unity agreement sponsored by Egypt had been going on since February outside the media spotlight. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Council of the League of Arab States, held in Cairo at the foreign minister level, gave the green light for the Palestinians to enter into indirect negotiations with Israel for a preliminary four-month period. Despite the lack of conviction in the seriousness of the Israeli side, the decision would give the indirect talks a chance and facilitate the US role, said Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa. "This should not be an open-ended process", he added. During a special session of the Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu welcomed the decision: "It seems that the conditions are ripening for the renewal of negotiations between us and the Palestinians", he said. Hamas subsequently strongly criticized this move (*Haaretz, IMEMC, Reuters*)

The Council of the League of Arab States discussed the Israeli measures in Jerusalem and the annexation of the Bilal bin Rabah Mosque in Bethlehem and the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque [in Hebron]. (*KUNA*)

The European Commission allocated €58 million in humanitarian aid to support operations in favour of the most vulnerable people affected by the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Palestine refugees in Lebanon. (*WAFI*)

According to an official from Gaza, Israeli forces had stormed the Hadarim detention centre, provocatively searching and verbally abusing detainees. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Sheikh Abdullah Yassin, Spokesperson of Hamas in Tulkarm, was released by Israel after three years of administrative detention without trial. (*IMEMC*)

EU Representative Christian Berger and the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Filippo Grandi, signed an agreement that included a €66 million contribution towards UNRWA's General Fund. (www.unrwa.org)

4

Israeli forces opened fire at homes and farmlands in Beit Hannon in northern Gaza. Some property damage had been reported, but no injuries. (*IMEMC*)

IDF troops arrested eight "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (*IMEMC*)

Fighters affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that they had fired on Israeli farmers north of the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to *Haaretz*, indirect talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) could begin as early as Sunday [7 March]. The Israeli daily reported that US Special Envoy George Mitchell would arrive in Israel on Saturday night [6 March] and would hope to be able to begin talks prior to US Vice-President Biden's arrival on Monday [8 March]. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed hope that the visits next week by Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Biden would help restart the peace process. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

According to *Ynetnews*, a Palestinian source downplayed the support of the Arab foreign ministers for indirect talks, stating that talks would begin at the latest after the meeting of the Arab League in Libya in about two weeks. The source had also indicated that map experts, among others, had been summoned to Ramallah to prepare for the talks and that the issue of permanent borders would be among the Palestinian priorities in the talks. (*Ynetnews*)

"We welcome the start of talks, even if they are proximity talks", Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting, ahead of US Vice-President Joe Biden and Special Envoy George Mitchell's arrival in the region next week. "In the end, our goal is to try to reach a peace agreement with our Palestinian neighbours via direct talks, but we have always said that we do not necessarily insist on this format", he said. "This Government wants to start a peace process and I tell you that we also want to complete it". (*AFP*)

"Israel cannot continue to maintain its Jewish and democratic identity as long as it continues to occupy those Arab lands", former US Secretary of State James Baker told reporters. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

"You are not far off from the point where the two-State solution becomes impossible", UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes told *The Jerusalem Post*. "If you are going to have a meaningful Palestinian State, it needs to have a meaningful piece of land. [...] It is territory that is split up", he said, citing the annexation of East Jerusalem, the separation wall, settlements and bypass roads. "It is a very funny kind of State. That is why people are not sure that a solution is available", said Mr. Holmes. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

It was reported that efforts were ongoing to arrange a summit in Rome in April between Israeli President Shimon Peres and PA President Abbas. The summit, which would bypass Prime Minister Netanyahu, was reportedly being prepared by, among others, Uri Savir, President of the Peres Center for Peace, and one of the architects of the Oslo Accords. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli soldiers handed over house demolition orders to eight families in the village of Beit Ar-Rush Al-Fauqa, south-east of Hebron, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Holmes had called for "radical" changes in Israeli policies towards the Occupied Palestinian Territory to allow people to carry out normal and dignified lives. In Gaza, border crossings must be re-opened, while in the West Bank, illegal demolitions and evictions should stop, he said. In "Area C", he called for allowing natural development. In Ramallah, Mr. Holmes met with PA Prime Minister Fayyad, expressing his support for the PA and the UN determination to continue helping vulnerable Palestinians. (*UN News Centre*)

A Knesset committee approved a draft bill that would impose economic sanctions on organizers of commemorations of “Nakba”, the displacement of Palestinians in the wake of the establishment of the State of Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli High Court of Justice had given approval to a select number of left-wing activists to march to an Israeli [settlement] in an Arab section of East Jerusalem over the weekend. The Jerusalem Police Chief warned that this move could make it difficult to prevent violent clashes. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

The EU-funded Project for Empowering the Palestinian Judicial System, Seyada II, announced the launch of a one-year training programme aimed at supporting the legal and professional skills of assistant prosecutors in the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

The World Food Programme (WFP) released a socio-economic and food security atlas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory which mapped out Palestinians' access to food and nutrition. (www.wfp.org)

The [\[Bertrand\] Russel Tribunal on Palestine](#), held in Barcelona, started its activities with a criticism of the Israeli Government for committing severe violations of international law and the basic rights of the Palestinian people. The main violation was depriving the Palestinians of their basic right to self-determination and the refusal to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967. (*IMEMC*)

5

Israeli navy guards detained three Gazan fishermen just off the shores of Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, the head of the local Fishermen's Union said. (*KUNA*)

About six Israeli tanks and four bulldozers went into Gaza through the Karim Abu Salim [Kerem Shalom] crossing, east of Rafah, and started sweeping through the area, a local radio said. An incursion also took place in the Shujaiya neighbourhood [of Gaza City]. In Jabalya, Israeli tanks deployed along the eastern borders opened fire at farm land, the radio quoted witnesses as saying. (*KUNA*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said he believed Palestinians should not enter into direct talks with Israel in light of the current controversy over heritage sites. Speaking from Cairo after a meeting of the follow-up committee for the Arab Peace Initiative, he said that delegates shared his views. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

“We expect both parties to act seriously and in good faith [during indirect talks]. If one side, in our judgement, is not living up to our expectations, we will make our concerns clear and we will act accordingly to overcome that obstacle”, said a document sent by the US to the PA, which *Haaretz* obtained. The document also reveals that US involvement would include “sharing messages between the parties and offering our own ideas and bridging proposals”. (*Haaretz*)

Senior Hamas official Izzat al-Rishq said: “Resuming these talks is selling illusions to the Palestinian people and playing with their emotions. Eighteen years of talks with Israel have achieved zero. What is there to expect from an extra four months?” (*Reuters*)

Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin urged the EU to increase pressure on Israel to end the Gaza blockade. “The tragedy of Gaza is that it is fast in danger of becoming a tolerated humanitarian crisis,” Mr. Martin wrote in an opinion piece for the *International Herald Tribune*, describing conditions there as “medieval, inhumane and utterly unacceptable”. “All that is being achieved through the imposition of the blockade is to enrich Hamas and marginalize even further the voices of moderation,” he added. He said that he would raise the issue at an EU foreign ministers meeting in Cordoba, Spain, this weekend. (*Reuters*)

Palestinian crossings liaison official Raed Fattouh said Israeli forces had decided to shut all Gaza crossings for the day. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The PA Health Ministry in Ramallah said that it had successfully arranged a delivery of medicine to the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Dozens of Palestinians were injured as Israeli forces entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, firing tear gas, rubber-coated bullets and stun grenades. Following a sermon on a recent Israeli decision to include two West Bank shrines on a list of national heritage sites, rocks were thrown from the direction of the mosques above towards Jews praying below at the Western Wall. At least 15 Israeli police officers were also injured by rocks, Israeli news reports said. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF would soon release new findings about a strike near the Ibrahim al-Maqadma Mosque during last year's “Operation Cast Lead” in Gaza, in an effort to refute the Goldstone report's claim that it had targeted civilians. The new evidence was based in part on Hamas and Islamic Jihad reports which showed that more than half the casualties in the strike had been armed members of these two groups. Five internal army panels set up by IDF Chief of General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi had initially said that there was no evidence that Israel had attacked the site at all. (*Haaretz*)

Members of the Security Council have called for restraint by all sides and an early return to the negotiating table, while voicing their concern at the current “tense” situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. “They urged all sides to show restraint and avoid provocative acts”, Ambassador Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet of Gabon, which holds the Council Presidency for March, told reporters after closed-door talks. (*UN News Centre*)

6

An Israeli border guard was lightly injured when confrontations erupted at the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Dozens of Beit Ummar village residents joined in protest calling for an end to land confiscations and closed zones that prevented farmers from accessing agricultural lands. Palestine Solidarity Project Spokesman Mohammad Ayad Awad said that the group had been met with tear gas when they reached the gate of the village. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers detained three Palestinian children, two aged 13 and one, 14, who had been gathering herbs in the village of At-Tuwani, in the Southern Hebron Hills. (*Wafa*)

EU Foreign Ministers [welcomed](#) the support of Arab nations for indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Meanwhile, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, said that she planned to travel to the region on 17 March. “I have asked to go to Gaza; we'll see what happens”, she told reporters in Cordoba. (*AFP, www.eu2010.es*)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell flew into Israel and met with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak. He met Prime Minister Netanyahu and will meet PA President Abbas today. (*The Guardian*)

A beating by Israeli prison guards had caused a Palestinian man in Israeli custody to become completely paralyzed, the Wa'ed Society for Detainees said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

7

Israeli soldiers had briefly invaded Qalqilya, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers detained six Palestinians in the West Bank. (*Ynetnews*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II left for London on a several-day working visit for talks with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on developments in the Middle East. (*Petra*)

The PLO Executive Committee voted in favour of US-mediated peace talks with Israel for four months, senior PLO official Yasser Abed Rabbo said. The talks would “initially focus on the issues of borders and security”, he added. (*AP, Reuters, Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip marked 1,000 days of the Israeli blockade. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli authorities had confiscated 300 dunums of Palestinian land in Beit Jala to complete the separation wall's construction, Khalid Azza, the head of the Bethlehem Anti-Wall Committee said. He said that once the wall's construction was complete, Beit Jala would be isolated from the neighbouring Al-Walaja village. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli military court agreed to release from custody a 13-year-old Palestinian boy held for nine days on suspicion of throwing stones at soldiers when his father was unable to pay the NIS 2,000 bail. (*Haaretz*)

8

Israeli forces carried out a helicopter airdrop west of Jenin, conducted military exercises and set up several checkpoints, Palestinian security sources said. (*Petra*)

Israeli police detained two Palestinian children, aged 11 and 12, in Hebron, following a scuffle with settler children. (*IMEMC*)

Israel had conveyed messages to the PA over the past few days that it must contain the popular protests that have recently erupted in the West Bank, stop PA officials from participating in them and keep them from turning violent, Palestinian sources told *Haaretz*. The PA was also reportedly told that it must reduce incitement regarding the Temple Mount [Al-Haram Al-Sharif] and Jerusalem and curtail its campaign against the use of Israeli [settlement] products. Israeli officials said that if the PA did not comply, Israel would reduce cooperation with the PA and increase its arrests in Palestinian-controlled areas, the Palestinian sources said.

(Haaretz)

The PLO announced the creation of a Supreme National Committee to discuss developments in US-brokered proximity talks with Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

The following statement was issued by US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell: "I'm pleased that the Israeli and Palestinian leadership have accepted indirect talks. We've begun to discuss the structure and scope of these talks and I will return to the region next week to continue our discussions. As we've said many times, we hope that these will lead to direct negotiations as soon as possible. We also again encourage the parties, and all concerned, to refrain from any statements or actions which may inflame tensions or prejudice the outcome of these talks." (www.state.gov)

In Washington, US State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley [said](#) that the indirect talks had started under the mediation of US Envoy Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell had met with Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu for two rounds of talks starting the previous day and then went to Ramallah to meet with PA President Abbas. Mr. Mitchell told Mr. Abbas and Mr. Netanyahu that the Annapolis understandings were non-binding in the current round of negotiations. (AFP, Haaretz, www.state.gov)

US-mediated indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians would be the last chance to keep the Middle East peace process alive, Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said. "The relationship has deteriorated to this stage where the US is trying to save this peace process with the last attempt [...] in order to see if it can be a tool to make decisions between Palestinians and Israelis", Mr. Erakat told *Israel Army Radio*. (Reuters)

US Vice-President Joe Biden is due in Israel today for an American diplomatic initiative to start indirect negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Mr. Biden is the highest ranking US official to visit since President Barack Obama took office. (BBC, The Guardian)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak said: "We would prefer direct negotiations with the Palestinians but in the current climate it was hard enough to achieve indirect talks", he said. (Haaretz)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair told reporters in Cairo that there was "no hope" for Palestinians unless they had an independent State. Mr. Blair's remarks came after meeting Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa. (DPA)

Israeli visa restrictions were the main obstacle to foreign investment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestine Trade Centre said in a report today. (AFP)

Israeli authorities today opened two crossings to allow the entry of limited quantities of fuel and food aid into Gaza. (The Palestine Telegraph)

Israel had given the green light for the building of 112 new homes in the "Beitar Illit" settlement near Bethlehem despite a partial moratorium on such construction, Environment Minister Gilad Erdan said. (AFP)

US State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said that Israel's authorization of 112 new apartments in the settlement of "Beitar Illit" in the West Bank did not violate Israel's moratorium on settlement expansion as they had been approved prior to the freeze. But he said that it was "the kind of thing that both sides need to be cautious of". (BBC)

After PA President Abbas' meeting with US Envoy Mitchell, Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that the issue of 112 new apartments in the settlement of "Beitar Illit" was the first item on the President's agenda, adding, "The President said this cannot stand. We cannot tolerate that each time we have discussions on peace-making the Israeli Government tenders more settlements, more incursions and more provocations". (AFP)

Israeli settlers living in an outpost on the village lands of Iraq Burin attacked a group of locals in the area, sparking clashes, Palestinian security forces said. Armed Israeli border police arrived injuring three Palestinian civilians who were transferred to a hospital. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA National Economy Minister Hassan Abu Libdeh said that he was drafting a law that would ban Palestinians from taking jobs in settlements, which he expected to take effect this month. (AP)

Dozens of Israeli settlers from the "Netafim" settlement tried to take control of a spring used by shepherds and farmers in the West Bank, a local official said. (Ma'an News Agency)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that he would be taking part in the 19 March Quartet meeting in Moscow, which he said presented a very good opportunity "to assess and encourage the earliest possible resumption of the proximity talks which will eventually, I hope, lead to direct negotiations between the parties". On 27 March, Mr. Ban would travel to Libya to meet with Arab leaders at the League of Arab States Summit where he planned to urge them to support an early resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. (DPA, UN News Centre)

At UN Headquarters, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with Israel's Vice-Premier Silvan Shalom. At a press encounter after the meeting, Mr. Shalom said that Israel wanted to "move to direct talks" with the Palestinians immediately. He said, "I hope the Secretary-General will convince his partners in the Quartet in Moscow to ask the Palestinians to cut and shorten the time needed to move to direct dialogue". (Xinhua)

9

Israeli forces detained three teenagers from the village of Husan, west of Bethlehem. An Israeli military spokesman confirmed the incident. (Ma'an News Agency)

IDF Chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi authorized a special UN bomb disposal unit to enter Gaza in order to neutralize unexploded ordnance left behind from "Operation Cast Lead". (Haaretz, Ynetnews)

US Vice-President Joe Biden held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem where he welcomed Mr. Netanyahu's decision to begin US-mediated indirect talks with the Palestinians and said he hoped that they would lead to direct negotiations that would produce a historic peace treaty. Earlier, Mr. Biden had assured Israeli President Shimon Peres of Washington's commitment to Israel's security and said that the agreed resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks provided a "moment of real opportunity" for peace. (Haaretz)

"It is positive the parties have begun to negotiate, even if it is via US intervention, because there is no alternative to negotiations", Danish Foreign Minister Lene Espersen said in a statement. (AFP)

Israel's Interior Ministry approved the building of 1,600 new housing units in the "Ramat Shlomo" settlement in East Jerusalem. "This is a dangerous decision and will hinder the negotiations", PA Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh told AFP. "We consider the decision to build in East Jerusalem to be a judgement that the American efforts have failed before the indirect negotiations have even begun", he added. (AFP, Haaretz)

US Vice-President Biden issued a [statement](#) condemning the Israeli decision to authorize 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. According to the statement, the timing and substance of the decision undermined the necessary trust. Moments earlier, President Barack Obama's Spokesman, Robert Gibbs, also condemned the announcement. (AP, Reuters, www.whitehouse.gov)

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

The Secretary-General condemns the approval of plans for the building of 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem by the Israeli Ministry of Interior earlier today. He reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law. Furthermore, he underscores that settlement activity is contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map, and undermines any movement towards a viable peace process. (UN press release SG/SM/12781)

In discussions with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on ways of reinvigorating the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, King Abdullah II of Jordan stressed the need for more international efforts. Today, the King will travel to the Russian Federation to meet with President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. (The Jordan Times)

Palestinian Legislative Council member Ashraf Jum'a, representing Fatah in Gaza, proposed what he termed as a "Unity Road Map" where Hamas would be expected to sign the Egyptian unity plan ahead of the Arab League Summit in Tripoli. Egypt would then refer it, along with the comments Hamas negotiators had on the plan, to Palestinian factions and to the Arab League. The Arab League would then refer the case to the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers, just in time to be discussed and ratified in Tripoli, where President Abbas would be present and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal would be invited. A final Egyptian document would then be signed on the sidelines of the Summit. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, David Harari, reportedly attempted to forcibly enter the Sheikh Jarrah home of Rifqa Al-Kurd, but was halted by a number of Jerusalemites, including former PA Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qader. According to witnesses, Mr. Harari was on a solidarity visit with the settlers, who had taken over the house, and was exploring the possibility of taking over part of the home for an office. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinians, along with international supporters, organized a protest against the creation of an Israeli "buffer zone" at the Erez crossing into Gaza. According to IMEMC, the Israeli military had destroyed farmers' lands and homes to create the zone, which Israel claimed was needed for its security. The activists said that this

would be a weekly, non-violent protest. (IMEMC)

Humanitarian aid for Gaza civilians by the Palestine Charity Committee of the International Islamic Charity Association, based in Kuwait, had been transferred through the Rafah crossing with Egypt, the Union of Arab Doctors said. The 18.5 tons of aid included winter clothing, milk formula and blankets for Palestinian children. (Ma'an News Agency)

10

Witnesses reported that Israeli tanks had opened fire on Palestinian homes and farmlands in eastern Gaza. (IMEMC)

Clashes erupted in Beit Unmar when Israeli soldiers invaded the town after a Molotov cocktail had been thrown at a military checkpoint, witnesses said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A Palestinian man had been detained at a Hebron crossing for carrying a knife. (www.idfil)

Following Israel's announcements of 112 new apartments in the "Beitar Illit" settlement in the West Bank and 1,600 new housing units in the "Ramat Shlomo" settlement in East Jerusalem, PA President Abbas discussed a political response with Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa and asked him to contact members of the follow-up committee on the Arab Peace Initiative. It was later announced that the Committee would meet today. (KUNA, Ynetnews)

Following a day of meetings with Palestinian leaders, US Vice-President Biden said that the United States pledged to play an active and sustainable role in the peace talks. He stressed that the Palestinians deserved an independent, viable and contiguous State and called on Israel to reverse its recent decisions on new settlements. (The Jerusalem Post)

During a news conference with Vice-President Biden, PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that the Israeli settlement announcement was damaging and undermined confidence in the prospects for peace. (Ma'an News Agency)

High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton [told](#) the European Parliament that she joined US Vice-President Biden in condemning the Israeli announcement of 1,600 new settlements in East Jerusalem. France and Germany were also among those who deplored the announcement. (DPA, KUNA, [www.europa.eu](#), Ynetnews)

The Jordanian Government called the Israeli move to build more settlement units another obstacle to peace saying that it eroded trust among concerned parties. "I share the view that this is a bad decision at the wrong time, and it's not a helpful contribution to the peace process", Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith told Sky News. A spokesman for the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said that, particularly in light of planned peace talks, the plan to build 1,600 new homes was "not acceptable". Morocco condemned the Israeli decision as a further attempt to separate East Jerusalem from the West Bank. UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband condemned Israel's plan and urged Israel to show its commitment to peace with actions, not only declarations. Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Abdul-Rahman Al-Attiah strongly condemned the Israeli decision describing it as barrier ahead of US efforts to revive the peace process. (AFP, Deutsche Welle, KUNA, The Jordan Times, Ynetnews)

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on a visit to Riyadh to receive the King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam, told journalists: "We are not spectators [in the Middle East]". The Prime Minister also insisted that Hamas should be at the table for Palestinian-Israeli peace talks: "We cannot bury our head in the sand", he said. "If we want to achieve positive results, then the talks must include all parties". (Middle East Online)

Undercover Israeli security agents had assaulted two Palestinian activists and detained several others in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, onlookers said. Both men were members of a local committee that organized protests against Israeli house demolitions. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli settlers were reported to have attacked a Palestinian village and set fire to a car in the West Bank. PA official Ghassan Daghlis urged the United States to put pressure on Israel "to stop the daily and repeated settler attacks". (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

Japan donated \$193,960 for two projects to improve Palestinian access to water supplies in rural communities in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

Haaretz reported that the European Parliament, following pressure from European Jewish leaders, had backtracked from their plan to pass a resolution demanding the prosecution of Israeli officials by the International Criminal Court. Meanwhile, the Parliament [adopted](#) a resolution endorsing the report and urging the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and EU member States to demand the implementation of the reports' recommendations and accountability for all violations of international law, including alleged war crimes, and urging both sides to conduct investigations that meet international standards. The resolution also expressed concern about the pressure placed on NGOs involved in the preparation of the report. (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, [www.europarl.europa.eu](#))

The situation in the Gaza Strip was becoming increasingly dire as the Israeli blockade approached its 1,000th day, allowing an illegal economy to flourish, Filippo Grandi, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, said. Mr. Grandi pointed out that, "Virtually no materials or equipment destined for reconstruction by the UN and by the private sector [...] can be transported from Israel". (UN News Centre)

The parents of US activist Rachel Corrie were seeking \$324,000 in compensation from Israel's Defense Ministry for the death of their daughter in 2003. Arguments in the civil case opened in a Haifa court. (Ynetnews)

11

A rocket was fired from Gaza striking a warehouse in Kibbutz Nirim, in southern Israel. No injuries were reported. (Haaretz)

An IDF spokesperson said that the Israeli Air Force had successfully bombed a weapons manufacturing facility in the southern Gaza Strip and an arms smuggling tunnel on the Rafah border, in response to a Qassam rocket attack on southern Israel earlier in the day. (Haaretz)

Israeli soldiers detained a 9-year-old Palestinian child and his 20-year-old brother in Hebron. Army sources claimed that the two had thrown stones at the "Abraham Avino" settlement outpost. (IMEMC)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak ordered that a full 48-hour closure be imposed on the West Bank starting at midnight, following a police assessment that riots might break out in Jerusalem and spill over into the West Bank. (Ynetnews)

Indirect talks with Israel would not go forward unless Israeli plans to construct 1,600 settlement homes in East Jerusalem were rescinded, Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said. The statement followed one by Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, who had announced that "the Palestinian President decided he will not enter into those negotiations now." Mr. Moussa later told reporters that "the talks have already stopped". That statement followed an emergency meeting of ambassadors of the Arab League member States. Mr. Moussa added: "There cannot be talks, direct or indirect, if the recent Israeli [settlement] decisions are not cancelled". (Ma'an News Agency, The Malaysian Mirror)

In a speech at Tel Aviv University, US Vice-President Biden said that the decision by the Jerusalem municipality to approve 1,600 new housing units in the settlement of "Ramat Shlomo" had "undermined the trust required for productive negotiations" and warranted his unequivocal condemnation. However, he said that he also appreciated the response of Prime Minister Netanyahu, "who announced this morning that he is putting in place a process to prevent this sort of occurrence, and who clarified that the beginning of actual construction would likely take several years". "The most important thing is for these talks to go forward and go forward promptly and go forward in good faith", he added. (BBC)

Prime Minister Netanyahu telephoned US Vice-President Biden and "expressed his regret for the unfortunate timing" of the settlement decision. "Both agreed the crisis was behind them", his office said. Mr. Netanyahu said that he had summoned Interior Minister Eli Yishai to reprimand him. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that Mr. Netanyahu's statement was "unacceptable because it talks about an error in timing and not the error in substance". (BBC)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and told him that his Government's latest settlement plans were a "deeply negative signal" for US-Israeli relations and had "undermined trust and confidence in the peace process", said State Department Spokesman P.J. Crowley. (Reuters)

The Quartet condemned in a [statement](#) the Israeli plans to expand settlements in East Jerusalem, agreeing to closely monitor developments in the region. (UN press release SG/2157)

US State Department Spokesman Philip J. Crowley said during a [daily press briefing](#): "I am not aware that the Palestinians have informed a US official that they are

pulling out of the proximity talks. [...] Today, here at the State Department, between George Mitchell and Assistant Secretary Jeff Feltman, we are reaching out to leaders throughout the region to assess where everybody is in the process and to determine how best to move forward". (www.state.gov)

World Bank Managing Director Juan José Daboub completed a two-day [official visit](#) to the West Bank. After meeting with PA Prime Minister Fayyad, he said, "After years of decline, we are now seeing signs of Palestinian economic recovery. If growth is to continue, the restrictions still facing Palestinian businesses and foreign investors must be eased and donors need to continue their support". (www.worldbank.org)

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said at a [press conference](#), following his visit to the region, that there had been no change of policy since 2007 on Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip, and reconstruction activities had barely started. Characterizing as unreasonable the linking of the fate of some 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza with the release of Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit, he expressed hope that the Israeli authorities would allow construction of water and sanitation projects. Illegal smuggling tunnels imposed a "gangster economy" which was not in the interest of Gaza or Israel, he said. He added that the Palestinians in East Jerusalem, some of whom had lived there for 60 years, had been put under pressure by the recently announced redevelopment plans, pointing out that East Jerusalem was occupied territory and the construction of settlements there was, therefore, illegal. (*UN News Centre*)
The Ir Amim Israeli peace group reported that the Jerusalem Municipality was currently looking into a plan to build 50,000 homes for settlers in East Jerusalem. (*IMEMC*)

The Local Council issued a tender for the building of new residential neighbourhoods in the "Elkana" settlement. (*Ynetnews*)

A group of settlers burnt an olive orchard in Sufa village, north-west of Hebron, while the Israeli army did not attempt to stop them. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli authorities would partially open the Kerem Shalom crossing into the Gaza Strip, Palestinian liaison official Raed Fattouh said. Approximately 116 to 126 truckloads of aid for both the commercial and agricultural sectors, including two trucks for the electricity company, would be allowed in, while 3 trucks of flowers would be allowed to leave Gaza for export. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

"We find this [European Parliament] resolution flawed and counterproductive", said Yoel Mester, spokesman for the Israeli Mission to the EU. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

The IDF prosecution filed an indictment against two soldiers who had allegedly forced a 9-year-old Palestinian boy to open a number of bags they thought might contain explosives during Operation Cast Lead. The bags turned out to be harmless. (*Haaretz*)

12

Palestinian youths hurled stones at Israeli security forces near the Temple Mount [Al-Haram Al-Sharif] in Jerusalem and tried to breach a barrier to enter the area, which had been sealed off. Police forces managed to prevent youths from breaching a checkpoint near East Jerusalem and one Palestinian was arrested after he assaulted a police officer. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli authorities informed Gaza officials that the Kerem Shalom, Kami and Nahal Oz crossings would be closed until Saturday evening. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers uprooted 40 olive trees in the village of Qaryut, south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The US announced that it was providing an additional \$55 million for UNRWA. (*AFP*)

13

Israeli forces arrested Mahir U'dda, a top Hamas leader, during a raid near Ramallah, the Israeli army said. A military statement said that Mr. U'dda had been "wanted" by Israeli intelligence for over a decade, suspected of planning and executing the 9 September 2003 simultaneous bombings of Cafe Hillel in Jerusalem and a bus stop near the Tzrifin military base in central Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency, www.idfil*)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak ordered the extension of the West Bank closure that had been expected to end today, until 16 March. The military said that humanitarian cases, including medical patients en route for treatment, 1,500 medical workers, 1,100 religious workers, 550 teachers and other professional groups "will be permitted to cross subject to the authorization of the Civil Administration. The transfer of merchandise will operate regularly". (*Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)
Israeli forces distributed land confiscation notices to residents of Wadi Rahhal, south of Bethlehem, to accommodate an amended route for the separation wall. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

14

The Israeli army carried out a number of military drills in the Jordan Valley, deploying warplanes, tanks and ground troops in the exercise, locals reported. Palestinians said that military training in the Valley put residents at fatal risk. An Israeli military spokesman said that the army was not familiar with the incident. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab youths hurled rocks at Israeli security forces in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

In an effort to dim support for the weekly protests against the separation wall, the IDF announced that Bil'in and Ni'lin villages would be designated as closed military areas every Friday until mid-August. (*Haaretz*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu consulted with seven senior cabinet ministers over a list of demands that Secretary of State Clinton had made in a telephone conversation. *Haaretz* learned that Ms. Clinton's list included: investigating the process that led to the announcement of the "Ramat Shlomo" construction plans in the middle of Vice-President Biden's visit; reversing the decision to approve the construction of the 1,600 new settlement units; making a substantial gesture toward the Palestinians, such as a release of prisoners, an IDF withdrawal from additional areas of the West Bank that would be transferred to Palestinian control, easing the siege of the Gaza Strip and the removal of further roadblocks in the West Bank. Mr. Netanyahu should also issue an official declaration that the talks with the Palestinians, even indirect talks, would deal with all the core issues – borders, refugees, Jerusalem, security arrangements, water and settlements. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told his Cabinet that the announcement of new housing plans for a settlement in East Jerusalem during a visit by Vice-President Biden last week had been "regrettable" and "hurtful". He said that the Government had set up a committee to "examine the chain of events and to ensure procedures" to prevent such an episode from happening again. But he did not indicate that the building project would be cancelled. (*The Washington Post*)

Senior Advisor to US President Obama, David Axelrod, said that Israel's announcement of plans to build 1,600 homes for Jews in East Jerusalem was "destructive" to peace efforts. He said that the move, which overshadowed a visit to Israel by US Vice-President Joe Biden, was also an "insult" to the United States. (*BBC*)
Right-wing ultra-orthodox Jews handed out fliers in Arabic in the streets of Jerusalem calling on "non-Jews to leave the land of Israel". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF entered the village of Urif after confrontations with settlers. Villagers said residents of the settlement of "Yizhar" had destroyed the crops of Palestinian farmers south of Nablus, provoking the clash. Five Palestinian vehicles from two villages near Nablus were torched by "Yizhar" settlers who claimed the incident was in retaliation to two Palestinians' sabotage of a settler's vineyard earlier. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Egyptian authorities permitted the transfer of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through the Al-Auja crossing between Israel and Egypt, south of Rafah, PA Representative Amr Hadhud said. He said that 200 tons of rice donated by the Egyptian Red Crescent had entered Gaza, the first stage of a food donation, including 1,500 tons of rice, sugar, and flour. Israel had agreed to the transfer of aid. On the same day, Israeli authorities allowed the limited entry of humanitarian aid and fuel supplies through Kerem Shalom. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA official Ghassan Daghlis said that the Israeli Civil Administration had issued an order to stop work on the Salman Al-Farisi Mosque in the northern West Bank village of Burin, ordering the demolition of the already built structure. The order was issued under the pretext that construction had no permit, Mr. Daghlis said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

15

Several Palestinians, as well as an Israeli soldier, were wounded after witnesses had reported hearing heavy gunfire at the Atara checkpoint near Ramallah. An Israeli military spokesman said that Israeli forces had responded with riot dispersal mechanisms against 70 rioters, although witnesses reported no protests in the area. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Dozens of Palestinians were reported to have rioted on the Palestinian side of the Qalandiya checkpoint, throwing stones at the Israeli border guards. (*Ynetnews*)

Fifteen Palestinians were arrested by Israeli forces in the West Bank. (*KUNA*)

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva arrived in Israel and was due to meet Israel's President Peres and Prime Minister Netanyahu. He would travel later to the Occupied Palestinian Territory to meet PA President Abbas. While in the region, Mr. Lula would be throwing his country's diplomatic weight behind the Middle East peace process, which he said required "someone with neutrality" to speak to all sides. (*BBC*)

At a Likud Party meeting, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel would continue to build [settlements] in Jerusalem in the same way that it had over the last 42 years. (*Haaretz*)

Prince Saud Al Faisal, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, told *Al-Riyadh* newspaper that the Israeli announcement of new settlements was an example of Israel's recklessness and he welcomed the tough US response to the move. Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said that Israeli actions in Jerusalem were "absurd, an evasion, manoeuvring and an attempt to suffocate the Palestinians". (*The GulfTimes*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *The Jordan Times*)

PLO Executive Committee member Ahmed Qureia warned that the continuation of Israeli practices in East Jerusalem could lead to a new intifada. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Jerusalem police deployed 2,500 policemen in East Jerusalem ahead of the dedication of the Hurva Synagogue, 330 metres away from the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Palestinian officials had called on Muslims to ascend the Al-Aqsa Mosque in order to protect it from alleged Israeli attempts to replace the Mosque with a Jewish temple. (*Haaretz*)

The US Government had signed two grant agreements, one in support of Rawabi, the first Palestinian planned city outside Ramallah, and one to the PA Ministry of Finance. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Addressing the Arab League in Cairo, Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said that the Union was ready to step up its aid to the Palestinians and beef up its security missions in Lebanon and in the Palestinian territories. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Yasser Abed Rabbo, Secretary-General of the PLO Executive Committee, told *Voice of Palestine Radio* that the rededication of the Hurva Synagogue in Jerusalem was a provocation. He said that it was an attempt to Judaize the city, warning the "assault on Jerusalem" would only increase tension and lessen the chances of reaching peace and resolution. He said that any manner or attempt to move closer to the Al-Aqsa Mosque "is like getting closer to a flame that will engulf the entire region". (www.iba.org.il)

Israel's Justice Ministry said that recent reform of the Israel Lands Administration had allowed the sale of confiscated lands in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights to private individuals and companies. (*Haaretz*)

According to a study published by the Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, Hamas had used Palestinian civilians as human shields during last year's Gaza war. The centre said that the 500-page document aimed to highlight the "failings" of the Goldstone report. Both the IDF and the Shin Bet, which had declined to testify in the Goldstone inquiry, provided evidence for the study. (www.intelligence.org.il)

In an interview with *RIA Novosti*, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the upcoming Moscow meeting of the Quartet came at a "crucially important" time for talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Mr. Ban, who would be arriving in Moscow on 17 March, said, "I'm quite convinced that this time the Quartet leaders will be able to play a significant role". (*RIA Novosti*)

16

Clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli military and police forces have erupted across the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in East Jerusalem. Hundreds of young Palestinians were reported to have attacked checkpoints and the IDF tightened access restrictions in and around Jerusalem. Dozens of Palestinians and two Israeli officers were reported injured and many were detained in the ongoing confrontations. As calm returned to the city, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that 42 Palestinians had been arrested on suspicion of stone-throwing and disruptions. *Ynetnews* learned that the disruptions had later spread to the West Bank town of Ni'lin where IDF troops acted to disperse a crowd of 50 stone-throwing Palestinians. Subsequently, the IDF reported that "illegal riots" were taking place in various West Bank sites. Hamas had declared a "day of rage" in connection with the consecration of a synagogue in Jerusalem. (*Haaretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *The Jerusalem Post*, www.idf.il)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh threatened that a religious war would engulf Israel, calling for an Arab-Palestinian campaign to stand with Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In Gaza, hundreds of students, teachers and politicians marched in solidarity with Jerusalem. (*IMEMC*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians fired a rocket at Israel but it landed in the northern Gaza Strip, short of its target. No injuries were reported. (*Ynetnews*)

US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton told a [news conference](#): "With respect to the announcement that occurred when the Vice-President was [in Israel], we've expressed our dismay and disappointment. And we have, as I have said earlier, engaged in consultations with our partners in the peace effort, the Israelis and the Palestinians, about the way forward, because we are very committed to achieving the two-State outcome that is the goal. But I think we'll see what the next days hold and we're looking forward to Senator Mitchell returning to the region and beginning the proximity talks." (www.state.gov)

A visit to Israel by US Special Envoy George Mitchell had been postponed as the US awaited a response to its demand that Israel reverse the decision on new settlement construction in East Jerusalem. (*BBC*, *CNN*)

Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin told a joint news conference with Secretary Clinton: "There has to be a renunciation of violence [by Hamas] and there has to be recognition of Israel [...] the Northern [Ireland] peace process is a useful template to look at in terms of how you bring people into a process that ultimately leads to a resolution." He added that, "it seems to me from my visit to Gaza [...] the voice of extremism, to a certain extent, is enhanced and strengthened by the blockade and by the siege". (www.state.gov)

General David Petraeus, Head of the US Central Command, told a Senate committee that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was presenting challenges to the US ability to advance its interests in the Middle East. He said that the conflict fomented anti-American sentiment due to a perception of US favouritism towards Israel. (*Voice of America*)

Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, met with Israeli Defense Minister Barak. He explained to Mr. Barak the great importance that the Spanish Presidency of the EU attached to the state of the Middle East peace process and reminded him of the Spanish stance of supporting the US efforts to restart negotiations. (www.eu2010.es)

Following a telephone conversation with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman blasted the international community for not having responded to all the measures that Israel had taken over the past year, including the settlement freeze and the removal of checkpoints. Mr. Liberman also told *Israel Radio* that demands to halt settlement construction in East Jerusalem were unreasonable. (*AP*, *AFP*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed for restraint from all sides after clashes had erupted in East Jerusalem, pledging to push for a resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians. "Settlements are illegal under international law", the Secretary-General emphasized at his monthly press conference. He also criticized Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman for releasing information about a confidential phone conversation with Mr. Ban to the media. (*UN News Centre*)

The Israeli Justice Ministry, responding to an inquiry by the Palestinian human rights organization Adalah, confirmed that its recent revision of Israeli land law would allow the sale of seized Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to Jewish citizens of Israel or to private companies. (*Haaretz*, *IMEMC*)

17

Two Palestinian missiles fell in southern Israel, but no casualties were reported. (*KUNA*)

Three unarmed IDF soldiers accidentally entered the PA-controlled area of Hebron during a training exercise. Clashes with Palestinians erupted, during which the three soldiers and three Palestinians were wounded. (*Haaretz*, *Ynetnews*)

Fierce clashes erupted between Palestinians and Israeli forces at the Qalandiya checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem as marches and confrontations took place across the West Bank. The Hawara and Beit Furik checkpoints in Nablus were closed, with heightened security imposed on the At-Tanib and Za'tara checkpoints. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops opened fire at a non-violent protest against the wall between Gaza and Israel. No injuries were reported. (IMEMC)

Israel lifted its closure of the West Bank and granted open access to Jerusalem's Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Police said thousands of troops would remain on high alert after the heaviest clashes in months had broken out the day before across Jerusalem during a "day of rage" announced by Hamas. (Haaretz)

The IDF raided several homes in East Jerusalem; dozens of Palestinian young men were detained on grounds of taking part in the confrontations against the Israeli army earlier. (Palestine Press Agency)

Israeli TV Channel 10 reported that the Israeli Government had approved the construction of additional housing units in East Jerusalem settlements: 309 units were planned in "Neve Yaakov", and 117 units in Jabal Abu Ghneim ("Har Homa"). (KUNA, IMEMC)

Yasser Abed Rabbo, Secretary-General of the Executive Committee of the PLO, said that the Palestinian leadership intended to call for a comprehensive meeting of all Palestinian factions in order to take a national stance to counter the Israeli aggression and violations in Jerusalem. He hinted that the PLO would also bring the matter to the Security Council. (IMEMC)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said, "President Abbas met with [EU High Representative Catherine] Ashton in his office in Ramallah and gave her a letter demanding that the European Union intervene to pressure Israel to completely halt settlements in the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem". He said that the letter included maps and other documents about settlement construction carried out since September 2009. (AFP)

At a [press conference](#) with visiting EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, Israeli Foreign Minister Liberman said, "This demand that Jews be forbidden to buy or to build in East Jerusalem is simply unreasonable. [...] Everyone is entitled to buy apartments and to build wherever they want, and there are already thousands of Arabs from East Jerusalem who live in Jewish neighbourhoods in West Jerusalem, and things will also continue that way". ([www.mfa.gov.il](#))

The Jerusalem Congress, established in 1953 in Amman as an independent international Islamic body, called on Arab and international Islamic organizations to push for enforcing international legitimacy resolutions that deem Jerusalem occupied Arab land, to put an end to Israeli violations against religious sites in the Holy City. (Petra)

Palestinians in Ramallah named a street after US activist Rachel Corrie, who had been crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer in 2003. (Ynetnews)

Defence for Children International/Palestine Section launched an urgent appeal against the illegal detention of Palestinian children in prisons inside Israel in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. (Wafa)

18

A Thai worker was killed after a Qassam rocket hit a greenhouse in southern Israel. The Ansar al-Suna Brigades, affiliated with Al-Qaeda, had claimed responsibility for the attack. "There are a number of groups in Gaza that are challenging Hamas, which is acting with restraint", Israel's Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai said. "Regardless of which group claims responsibility for the Qassam fire, Israel holds Hamas accountable for anything that happens on the ground because it rules Gaza", he added. (Ynetnews)

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

The Secretary-General condemns today's rocket attack from Gaza which killed a civilian in Israel. All such acts of terror and violence against civilians are totally unacceptable and contrary to international law. (UN press release SG/SM/12795)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, who was visiting the Gaza Strip, said at a news conference after the rocket attack: "I condemn any kind of violence. We have got to find a peaceful solution to the issues and problems". (Haaretz)

Israeli troops detained nine Palestinian civilians in Nablus and Qalqilya. (IMEMC)

The Israeli army detained dozens of Palestinians in the Fawwar refugee camp, south of Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu called US Secretary of State Clinton to follow up on their conversation from the previous week. It was reported that the two had discussed the planned "Ramat Shlomo" settlement construction and that Mr. Netanyahu had proposed a number of confidence-building measures between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank. (The Jerusalem Post, [www.state.gov](#))

Israeli President Shimon Peres told visiting EU High Representative Catherine Ashton that Israel reserved the right to build in Jerusalem and its construction policy in the city had not changed in 40 years. Mr. Peres said that the policy had been carried out in accordance with all relevant parties, including the Palestinians, and had never interfered with the peace process. He added that Israel would continue the policy and called for a quick resumption of peace talks so that borders between Israel and future Palestine could finally be set. (Haaretz)

Following meetings with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, stressing the need for direct talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, said that proximity talks were not an end in itself. Reiterating his concerns about developments in Jerusalem, Mr. Ban called for meaningful dialogue on all core issues. (UN News Centre)

The PA President's Office for Humanitarian Assistance distributed financial assistance to 40 needy families and people with disabilities. (Ma'an News Agency)

Ynetnews reported that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had been presented with a new proposal according to which construction in [existing settlements] in East Jerusalem would be reduced, while the [new settlement] construction in Arab neighbourhoods would be frozen. (Ynetnews)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay said in her [report](#) on the implementation of Human Rights Council resolutions S-9/1 and S-12/1, submitted the previous day: "Investigations launched by the Government of Israel into alleged violations related to the military operations in Gaza of December 2008-January 2009 remain inadequate to provide effective remedies. While the processes put in place by responsible Palestinian authorities are recent and not much information is available, there is at this point no indication of credible investigations having taken place with regard to allegations of violations by Palestinian armed groups". (AP, [www.ohchr.org](#))

19

Six Israeli air strikes were carried out in the Gaza Strip. The IDF issued a press release, stating that the strikes were a response to the previous day's rocket firing at Israel, which had claimed the life of a Thai national. Two Palestinians were reported to be injured. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, [www.idf.il](#), Ynetnews)

Masked Palestinians burned tires in the Shu'fat refugee camp, north of Jerusalem, and hurled stones at Israeli forces, who responded with "crowd dispersal means". (Ynetnews)

A Qassam rocket was launched from the Gaza Strip at Israel. No injuries or damage were reported. (The Jerusalem Post)

Three Palestinians were detained overnight in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency, [www.idf.il](#))

Several protests took place throughout the West Bank, particularly in the area around Ramallah, where demonstrators were reported to be hurling rocks at Israeli security forces. The IDF said that three Palestinians had been arrested. According to IMEMC, five Palestinians had been injured and eight detained by Israeli forces during protests against the separation wall. Palestinian and international protesters joined demonstrations across the West Bank, in reaction to Israel's declaration of two villages [Ni'lin and Bil'in] as "closed military zones". A US citizen was seriously injured by Israeli fire near Ramallah, onlookers said. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, [www.idf.il](#), Ynetnews)

According to Palestinian sources, Israeli forces stormed the courtyards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and climbed atop the roofs of buildings within its walls. Israeli forces were also reported to have raided several homes in various areas of the Old City of Jerusalem and arrested dozens of Palestinians, including two for allegedly having thrown a Molotov cocktail at Israeli security forces. (KUNA, The Jerusalem Post)

The Quartet – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and EU High Representative for

Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton – joined by US Special Envoy George Mitchell and Quartet Representative Tony Blair, met in Moscow. The Quartet issued a [statement](#), inter alia, recalling that the international community had not recognized Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, condemning the recent Israeli announcement of 1,600 new settlement units in East Jerusalem, and calling for a complete settlement freeze. In the statement, the Quartet also indicated that proximity talks were an important step towards direct negotiations and expressed the belief that the negotiations should lead to a mutual agreement on a two-State solution within 24 months. (BBC, Reuters, UN press release SG/2158)

Reacting to the Quartet statement, Israeli Foreign Minister Liberman said that the Quartet was ignoring 16 years of Israeli attempts at negotiations and stressed that peace could not be created artificially with unrealistic timetables. Meanwhile, PA President Abbas welcomed the statement as “very important.” (DPA, Haaretz) According to Haaretz, Israeli officials had confirmed that US President Obama was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Netanyahu on 23 March. (Haaretz) Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the decision to build more settlements. He pledged not to normalize relations with Israel until it lifted the siege of Gaza. He said that the Israeli decision to build 1,600 settlement units in East Jerusalem was unacceptable and noted that Israel wanted to liquidate the Palestinian [presence] one by one. (KUNA)

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued a [statement](#) expressing grave concern over Israel's ongoing policy of perpetuating its occupation of East Jerusalem through settlement expansion and other policies and actions illegal under international law. (UN press release GA/PAL/1153)

20

Israeli military intelligence officials briefed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on security issues including smuggling routes used by Iran to provide weapons to groups in the Middle East. In addition, they updated the Secretary-General and Israel's President Peres about the status of IDF investigations into the military's conduct during Operation Cast Lead. (www.idf.il)

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and US Special Envoy George Mitchell stressed the importance of the previous day's Quartet statement and the call to resume “proximity talks” as soon as possible. Mr. Kouchner indicated that the Quartet gave “a small hope” that there could be positive developments at a time when the situation “was not very encouraging” with the announcement by Israel it was building 1,600 new settlement units. (NAM News Network, KUNA) Mauritania had fully severed diplomatic relations with Israel, the country's Foreign Minister, Naha Mint Mouknass, said. The ties had been frozen in response to Israel's war on Gaza. (Haaretz)

Visiting Ramallah, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reiterated his commitment to help the Israeli and Palestinian sides reach a settlement in the next 24 months. “Indirect talks”, Mr. Ban [told](#) reporters after meeting with PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, “are not the end result”, and there were “no other alternatives” to direct negotiations. (UN News Centre)

Live ammunition had killed two 16-year-old Palestinian boys in the northern West Bank village of Iraq Burin despite the Israeli military's denials, medical officials and human rights advocates said. (Ma'an News Agency)

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

The Secretary-General, who is on the first day of his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, is deeply distressed and concerned by reports of the deaths of two Palestinian teenagers in the West Bank. He repeats his condemnation of rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, which occurred again today. The Secretary-General strongly appeals for calm and an end to violence, particularly at this critical juncture. (UN press release SG/SM/12801)

More than a thousand people in Indonesia protested Israel's plan to build settlements in East Jerusalem. (AFP)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, demanded that the international community place observers in West Bank settlements and East Jerusalem. “Even if Netanyahu would accept the position of the Quartet, in their call for a [settlement] building freeze we wouldn't believe him because the building continues secretly”, he said. (Haaretz)

21

Two Palestinians were hurt when Israeli forces used riot-dispersal means near Bethlehem against a rally commemorating the killing of US activist Rachel Corrie. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli military said that a soldier had been on patrol near a crossing south-east of Nablus when two Palestinians approached and attempted to stab him. Soldiers opened fire and both Palestinians were killed. (AP)

A rocket launched from the Gaza Strip fell south of Ashkelon causing no damage or injuries. (Ynetnews)

Israeli forces bombed an area south of Gaza city. They also fired on Palestinian homes and properties east and north of Khan Yunis. (Petra)

Palestinian sources reported that a Palestinian group had opened fire at Israeli army vehicles near Hebron. The army reported no injuries. (IMEMC)

Some 100 Palestinians protested near the settlement of “Teqoa”, south-west of Bethlehem, and hurled stones at [Israeli] security forces, which fired stun grenades and tear gas in an effort to disperse the crowd. (The Jerusalem Post)

Dozens of Palestinians hurled stones and burned tires in Al-Issawiya in East Jerusalem. Border guard forces responded with crowd-dispersal means. No injuries were reported. (Ynetnews)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said after meeting Prime Minister Netanyahu: “I am going to report to the Security Council about the results of the [Moscow] Quartet meeting and about my visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority. And I am going to participate in the League of Arab Summit. I will try to encourage the Arab leaders to support and encourage these proximity talks.” (UN News Centre)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell arrived in Israel in a bid to try to relaunch the peace process, the US Embassy announced. He was due to hold talks later in the day with Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israeli officials said. (AP)

Fatah official Nabil Sha'ath said that there would be no return to talks with Israel until a full settlement halt was upheld, following a meeting between the PLO and leaders of Palestinian factions in Ramallah. He added: “We will not be dragged [into] an Israeli escalation that wants us to enter into armed confrontation.”

(Ma'an News Agency)

“Building in Jerusalem is like building in Tel Aviv” and there would be no restrictions, Prime Minister Netanyahu told his Cabinet. Cabinet Ministers said that while there would be no formal freeze, construction in settlements in East Jerusalem would be restricted. (AP)

Noam Shalit, father of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, told *Israel Radio* that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had promised him to continue calling for his son's release and for a prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas. (The Jerusalem Post)

“Every day they show heroism and quiet courage and this is an inspiration,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said while visiting the Khan Yunis section of Gaza.

The people of the area, he said, “are striving to provide for their families amid unacceptable, unsustainable conditions”. Speaking of the Israeli Government's recent approval of the UN request to continue work on 150 housing units in Khan Yunis, a flour mill and a sewage treatment plant, he said that, while a positive step, it was “like a drop in a bucket”. Mr. Ban said that the Israeli Gaza closure “prevents legitimate commerce and encourages smuggling. It undercuts moderates and empowers extremists”. (UN News Centre)

22

Local sources reported that Israeli jet fighters had bombarded the tunnel area at the southern Gaza Strip borders with Egypt; damage was reported but no injuries.

Meanwhile jet fighters commenced bombing runs targeting the disused Yasser Arafat International Airport's buildings and runways. Over the weekend, Israeli raids targeting the Gaza Strip had left 15 Palestinians injured, medical sources reported. (IMEMC)

Israeli soldiers detained a Palestinian during a raid in the Far'a refugee camp, north of Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told an American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) conference: “New construction in East Jerusalem or the West Bank undermines mutual trust and endangers the proximity talks that are the first step toward the full negotiations that both sides want and need. It exposes daylight between Israel and the United States that others in the region could hope to exploit. And it undermines America's unique ability to play a role – an essential role, I might add – in the peace process”. (The Guardian)

In a speech to AIPAC in Washington, D.C., Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "Jerusalem is not a settlement. It's our capital. In Jerusalem, my Government has maintained the policies of every single Israeli Government since 1967. [...] Today, nearly a quarter of a million Jews, that's almost half the city's Jewish population, live in neighbourhoods that are just beyond the 1949 armistice lines. [...] Everyone knows that these neighbourhoods will be part of Israel in any peace settlement and therefore, building in them no way precludes the possibility of a two-State solution." (*The New York Times*, www.pmo.gov.il)

The Obama Administration was seeking to establish conditions for the Israeli-Palestinian talks to resume, US Special Envoy George Mitchell said, urging the two sides to exercise restraint. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that the Palestinians wanted to give "a chance" to indirect talks. They spoke after their meeting in Amman. The US wanted to "enter proximity talks at the earliest possible time in a manner in which we hope will lead to direct negotiations and ultimately to an agreement that leads to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East", Mr. Mitchell said after talks with PA President Abbas in Amman. He later met with Jordan's King Abdullah II. A palace statement quoted the King as telling Mr. Mitchell that Israel "must stop all unilateral measures in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially provocative moves aimed at changing Jerusalem's identity and threatening its holy sites". Separately, Mr. Erakat added: "We want to make sure that the decision of the Israeli Government to construct 1,600 housing units in East Jerusalem and more to come is really stopped". He said that the Palestinians also wanted assurances that similar Israeli moves would be prevented in the future. (*AP*)

The Israeli authorities had opened the Kerem Shalom and the Karni crossings for the entry of limited quantities of fuel and food aid into the Gaza Strip, crossings official Raed Fattouh said. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

EU foreign ministers called for a total freeze on settlement building, as Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman visited Brussels. "We asked for a total freeze of settlement activities and we will pursue this policy", said Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, whose country holds the rotating EU Presidency. (*AFP*)

EU ministers for foreign affairs met with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, who reported on her recent visit to the Middle East and on the Quartet meeting in Moscow. They also met with Quartet Representative Tony Blair, who briefed them on the situation and efforts on the ground. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had angered German Chancellor Angela Merkel after his office had given the media details of a phone conversation between the two leaders on settlement construction in East Jerusalem while neglecting to mention that Ms. Merkel was highly critical of the plan, German officials said. (*Haaretz*) The Jerusalem Municipality cancelled a scheduled meeting to discuss new construction plans in the "Har Homa" settlement, *Israel Army Radio* said, reportedly to avoid arguments with the US Administration during Mr. Netanyahu's visit to Washington. (*IMEMC*)

The Human Rights Council [heard](#) a presentation by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay of reports concerning the "human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories" and then held a [general debate](#) on follow-up to the ninth and twelfth special sessions of the Council concerning the same topic. (www.ohchr.org)

23

An IDF spokesperson said that the Israeli Air Force had successfully bombed a weapons storage facility in Gaza City overnight. Palestinian sources said that at least four Palestinians had been injured. (*Haaretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Witnesses reported that Israeli military forces had invaded the evacuated settlement of "Dugit" in northern Gaza, beating up and detaining 20 Palestinian workers. (*IMEMC*)

A rocket was reportedly fired from Gaza at an area south of Ashkelon in Israel. No injuries or significant damage was reported. (*Haaretz*)

During a visit aimed at supporting peace efforts in the Middle East, Chinese Vice Premier Hui Liangyu met with PA Prime Minister Fayyad and toured the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*, *Xinhua*)

In a meeting with US congressional leaders, Prime Minister Netanyahu warned that if Palestinian leaders were to maintain their demand for a full freeze on new settlements, "... it could put the peace negotiations on hold for another year". Subsequently, PA Presidential Spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, reiterated that talks would remain frozen "until Israel commits to the conditions of the Road Map". (*BBC*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *Reuters*, *Ynetnews*)

US President Obama met with Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House. No official statements or readouts emerged from the encounter. According to *The Times*, White House aides said that the decision not to hold a press conference reflected strains in their relationship since the announcement of new Israeli settlements in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu's Spokesman, Nir Hefez, described the atmosphere at the meeting as good. (*BBC*, *CNN*, *Haaretz*, *The Times*)

Israeli authorities delivered demolition notices to eight Bedouin families in the area near the Shu'fat refugee camp, east of Jerusalem. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Two Israeli soldiers went on trial in an Israeli military court, accused of using a nine-year-old Palestinian boy to check for booby traps during last year's war in Gaza. (*AFP*)

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, told an event organized by the Brussels-based think tank European Policy Centre that the PA was to come back this month with new arguments so that the Court could decide to start investigations into possible war crimes committed by Israeli soldiers during the offensive in Gaza. (*KUNA*)

The Tel Aviv based Macro Centre for Political Economics had issued a report stating that over the past four decades, \$17.4 billion had been spent on building settlements in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. Between 2004 and 2008 alone, 6,657 new settlement buildings had been erected. (*AFP*)

It was reported that the Jerusalem Municipality had approved the construction of 20 additional settlement units in East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the Municipality said that reports of new constructions were distorted as the building plan had been approved in July 2009. (*AP*, *DPA*, *IMEMC*)

24

The Israeli Air Force launched two air strikes on Beit Lahia overnight. Two residents were reportedly injured. (*IMEMC*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

According to witnesses, Israeli forces entered a school south of Hebron, threatened schoolboys and sprayed tear gas. An Israeli military spokesman said that he had no knowledge of the incident, but said that crowds had been dispersed when troops were surrounded by at least 200 rock-throwing Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians hurled rocks and damaged an Israeli vehicle near the Hawara crossing [near Nablus]. (www.idf.il)

Palestinian Legislative Committee member from Hamas, Mahmoud Al-Ramahi, urged the Arab League to respond to Prime Minister Netanyahu's comment equating building [settlements] in Jerusalem with building in Tel Aviv by withdrawing the Arab Peace Initiative. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said that terminating the Arab Peace Initiative would be on the agenda of the summit to be held in Libya. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi said in a briefing to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Gaza was not under siege and that the Palestinians in Gaza were not enduring a humanitarian crisis. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton issued the following declaration: "The European Union condemns the recent decision of the Israeli authorities to authorize construction around the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem. The international community is making every effort to facilitate the resumption of peace talks. Settlement construction in East Jerusalem is illegal and undermines these efforts. The EU calls on Israel to reverse this decision." (www.consilium.europa.eu)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's Office said in a statement: "There is no limitation on the right of property in Jerusalem. Jews and Arabs can buy and sell freely private property and homes in all the city, and that is the reality". (*Reuters*)

According to the head of the Palestinian Investment Fund, the PA had submitted a request to Israel for jurisdiction over land in the Jordan Valley for a development project, including a tourist resort, valued at \$2.1 billion. (*Reuters*)

The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem [said](#), “The discriminatory and unfair division of shared water resources creates a chronic water shortage in the West Bank, and is liable to harm Palestinians’ health. [...] Due to the water shortage, a substantial percentage of residents of the West Bank are forced to purchase water from tankers at prices three to six times higher than the price of water supplied in the water network”. (Wafa, www.btselem.org)

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [briefed](#) the Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. (UN News Centre, UN press release SC/9891)

The two-day UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People under the theme “Building institutions and moving forward with establishing the State of Palestine”, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, opened in Vienna. Statements were made, inter alia, by Johannes Kyrle, Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Maxwell Gaylard, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, [speaking](#) on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Zahir Tanin, Head of the Committee’s Delegation and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN in New York, and PA Minister for Planning and Administrative Development Ali Al-Jarbawi, who also delivered the keynote presentation. (Division for Palestinian Rights, UN News Centre, UN press release GA/PAL/1155)

25

A 32-year-old Palestinian worker was critically injured as Israeli forces at the Sufa crossing opened fire on a group of men collecting rubble for construction. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israeli gunboats opened fire on Palestinian fishermen off the coast near Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, slightly injuring one of them. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israeli forces detained five Palestinians in Hebron, bringing the number of Palestinians detained in the West Bank this week to 19, including seven children. (IMEMC, www.idfil.org)

Ghaleb Diwan, Director-General of the PA Customs Authority, said that Israel had tightened procedures around the West Bank city of Salfit and had threatened to invade following seizure by PA customs officers of goods produced in the settlements in the district. (Ma’an News Agency)

A 15-year old Palestinian had been injured when Israeli forces opened fire near the Erez crossing in northern Gaza. Two other Gaza residents had been injured by Israeli fire. (Ma’an News Agency)

At a press conference in Libya ahead of the Arab League Summit, Secretary-General of the League, Amre Moussa, said that as long as Israel continued its occupation of Palestinian territory, it should [expect] more rejection, hostility and resistance. At the same time, Deputy Secretary-General of the League, Ahmed Ben Helli, told *Xinhua* that Arab leaders were expected to renew their commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative. It had also been reported that Arab foreign ministers had agreed to a request by the PA to raise \$500 million to support Palestinians in Jerusalem. (AFP, Ma’an News Agency, *Xinhua*)

Prior to his departure from the United States, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that progress had been made in his talks with US leaders but cancelled all scheduled interviews with reporters. White House Spokesman Robert Gibbs characterized the talks between Mr. Netanyahu and President Obama as “honest and straightforward”. En route from Washington, Mr. Netanyahu said: “We think we have found a golden way that would allow the Americans to move the peace process forward while preserving our national interests”. It was reported that top Israeli ministers would be assembled the following day to consider a package of goodwill gestures. Meanwhile, PA President Abbas said that he was unaware of any new developments emanating from the White House meeting. (AFP, *Reuters*)

Israeli-Palestinian tensions were affecting US national security interests in the Middle East, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates told a news conference. “The lack of progress toward Middle East peace is clearly an issue that’s exploited by our adversaries in the region”, he said. (AP)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa announced that the organization’s member States had approved a \$500-million assistance package for Palestinians residing in Jerusalem. (Ynetnews)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Silvan Shalom said that [settlement] construction in Jerusalem was “unconditional” and that Israel was dealing only with the regulations and procedure. “If we blink now, we will lose everything, and when that happens the Government will collapse,” he told *Israel Radio*. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Eli Yishai said that the Government would continue to build up Jerusalem and that it was clear there would be no moratorium on construction, *Army Radio* reported. (Haaretz)

The Human Rights Council adopted a [resolution](#) on follow-up to the report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (“Goldstone report”) in which it requested the High Commissioner to appoint a committee of independent experts to monitor the investigations undertaken by Israel and the Palestinian side. The Council had [adopted](#) a day earlier three other resolutions pertaining to settlements, the right to self-determination, and grave Israeli human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (www.ohchr.org, www.unog.ch)

The UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under the theme “Building institutions and moving forward with establishing the State of Palestine,” had [concluded](#) in Vienna. (UN Press Release GA/PAL/1159)

Israel rejected the resolution by the Human Rights Council which called for the establishment of a fund for the country to pay Palestinians for damages incurred during Operation Cast Lead. (The Jerusalem Post)

26

A Qassam rocket was fired from Gaza into Israel. No damage or injuries were reported. (www.idfil.org)

According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, during the week of 18 to 24 March, 4 Palestinian civilians, including a child, had been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank, and 22 civilians, including 4 children and a woman, had been wounded. (Ma’an News Agency)

The *Al-Arabiya* news channel reported that two Israeli soldiers and two Palestinians had been killed near Khan Yunis when a bomb explosion targeted an Israeli patrol and was followed by a gunfight. (AFP)

Prime Minister Netanyahu’s Spokesman, Nir Hefez, said that Mr. Netanyahu and President Obama had reached a “list of understandings” but disagreements remained on terms for renewing peace talks with the Palestinians. “Israeli [settlement] construction policy in Jerusalem has remained the same for 42 years and isn’t changing”, he added. “Israel is prepared to make additional steps in order to advance peace talks”, he said. (BBC, Haaretz, *Reuters*)

In an interview, King Abdullah II of Jordan warned that Israeli practices in Jerusalem were undermining “already cold” Jordanian-Israeli ties and threatening stability in the region. (The Jordan Times)

Shamir Salads, a company located in a West Bank settlement, had been marketing its products in Europe using a false address west of the Green Line, in violation of an agreement between Israel and the EU, the Gush Shalom group said. (Haaretz)

Anti-wall demonstrations had been taking place in several places in the West Bank, including in Ni’lin and Bil’in, which had been declared closed military zones on Fridays. The IDF reported that they had been using “crowd dispersal mechanisms” to stem the “violent and illegal riots”. (Ma’an News Agency, IMEMC, www.idfil.org)

Representatives of civil society organizations and activists attending the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, [held](#) in Vienna under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, reported on actions taken against the wall built by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and especially around the village of Bil’in, highlighting the importance of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the wall. (UN press release GA/PAL/1160)

Israeli forces detained a 33-year-old Palestinian at a military checkpoint near Tulkarm and severely beat and injured an 18-year-old Palestinian at the Qalandiya checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Qassam rocket fired by Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip landed in Israel's Negev region. There were no reports of injury or damage. (*Ynetnews*)
 "We cannot resume indirect negotiations as long as Israel maintains its settlement policy and the status quo," PA President Abbas told the Arab League Summit in Libya. "Negotiations on the borders would be absurd if Israel decides on the ground the border. [...] We have always said that Jerusalem is the jewel in the crown and the gate to peace". (*BBC*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on leaders gathered at the Arab League Summit to support indirect negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians with a common aim of resolving all final issues within 24 months. "I am aware that regional confidence in the Israeli Government is very low, but there is no alternative to getting the parties to the negotiating table and testing their commitment", the Secretary-General said in his [address](#), noting his concern about recent Israeli decisions on settlements and holy sites. (*UN press release SG/SM/12811*)

28

Several Israeli armoured vehicles and military bulldozers advanced 500 metres into Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Bulldozers uprooted trees and farmland while the army opened fire. (*IMEMC*)

The harassment of four Polish Members of Parliament at Ben Gurion Airport when leaving Israel after visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territory was an unwarranted insult, the Brussels-based European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza (ECESG) said in a statement. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Arab leaders concluded the 22nd Arab League Summit with the adoption of a declaration, which mandated the establishment of a legal committee to follow up on the "Judaization" of East Jerusalem, evictions and attacks against holy sites, with the aim of putting its findings before national and international courts. Leaders agreed to hold an international conference on Jerusalem this year sponsored by the Arab League, with the participation of Arab organizations, unions and civil society institutions. Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said: "Within the next few weeks, we have to decide what to do: whether to continue with the [Israeli-Palestinian] negotiations or to completely shift course. [...] If we find that Israel is not leaving an opportunity to build two States, we are investigating the possibility of supporting a one-State solution. But such a decision will [...] come after serious investigation and study". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Medical sources in the Gaza Strip reported that a 5-year-old Palestinian child suffering from respiratory issues had died after Israel had rejected all applications for his transfer to an Israeli hospital. (*IMEMC*)

29

An armed group fired a locally-made missile from Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, into Ashkelon, Israel, according to Israeli media reports. No Palestinian group had so far claimed responsibility for the attack. (*KUNA*)

A general closure was imposed on the West Bank until the end of the Passover holiday on 5 April. Israeli authorities also ordered all the crossings with the Gaza Strip closed on 29 and 30 March. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

During talks in Paris last week between a senior US official and Qatar's Foreign Minister, the official said that the US would "seriously consider abstaining" if the issue of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem was put to a [Security Council] vote, a diplomat told the *BBC*. (*BBC*)

More than 20,000 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem could soon face demolition orders, according to Ahmad Ruweidi, a legal adviser on Jerusalem affairs in PA President Abbas' office. Israeli courts would soon accuse homeowners of having violated construction restrictions over the past 10 years, Mr. Ruweidi said.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Senior Israeli ministers had publicly rejected American demands for curbs on building in Jewish [settlements] of East Jerusalem and other concessions to the Palestinians, indicating no imminent end to the rift between Israel and the United States. Benny Begin, a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu's inner cabinet — which had met twice since Mr. Netanyahu's return from Washington last week — said on *Israel Radio* that the status of East Jerusalem should be resolved in direct negotiations with the Palestinians, not in advance. (*The New York Times*)

PA and Israeli forces cracked down on participants at a Bethlehem rally who were protesting the continued detention of the Palm Sunday detainees and marking Land Day. More than 200 protesters joined the demonstration, organized by Fatah and PLO members, over the unprecedented detention the previous day of a high-ranking Fatah official, Abbas Zaki, the first arrest of a high-ranking Palestinian official by Israeli forces during peace time. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

30

A Palestinian teenager was killed and 12 people were wounded, including children, as Israeli troops opened fire at Land Day demonstrators near the Gaza border today, Palestinian medics said. Hundreds of demonstrators marched to the border, east of the town of Khan Yunis, to mark this annual commemoration of Israel's killing of six people during a 1976 protest by Israeli Arabs against land confiscations. (*AFP*)

The Guardian reported that several lawmakers in Britain would be asking their Government to halt its weapons deals with Israel after a recently published report stated that British weapons had "almost certainly" been used by Israel during Operation Cast Lead. (*The Guardian, IMEMC*)

Israel would allow a shipment of clothes and shoes to be delivered to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip for the first time in the nearly three-year-old blockade of the enclave, Palestinian officials said. (*Reuters*)

[CARE](#) and the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission have implemented an emergency food security project in more than 14 localities in the northern West Bank, and in 10 areas in the northern and central Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics issued a statement today to mark Land Day, estimating that more than 85 per cent of Palestinian land remained under Israeli control, with 55 per cent of settlers in the West Bank centred in the Jerusalem governorate. (*Ma'an News Agency*)