

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

MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW

May 2005

Monthly highlights

- Palestinians hold elections for 84 local governments. ([5](#) and [6 May](#))
- Secretary-General Annan appoints Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process. ([6 May](#))
- Quartet principals meet in Moscow and issue statement. ([9 May](#))
- Summit of South American-Arab Countries expresses support for Palestinians. ([11 May](#))
- PA President Abbas meets President Bush at the White House. ([26 May](#))

I

Palestinian security forces, which have been deployed in the southern Gaza Strip since January 2005 to end anti-Israeli attacks and uncover cross-border tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip, were forced to stop an operation to destroy cross-border smuggling tunnels when Israeli troops fired at them. Security sources said that the operation had been coordinated with Israel. One Palestinian, who was operating a bulldozer at the time, broke his leg after leaping out of the vehicle to avoid the gunfire. Elsewhere along the border, a 40-year-old Palestinian was moderately injured by Israeli fire. The IDF had no immediate information about either event, but said they would check for details. (AFP)

Israeli special forces briefly raided Tulkarm before dawn for the first time since handing it over to Palestinian Authority (PA) control in March, arresting Mohammed Shalhoub, 18 (Mohammad Ganem, 19, according to AFP), an Islamic Jihad militant, who was planning a suicide attack against Israelis. An explosive belt and a videotaped message declaring his intention to sacrifice his life was found at his house. Mr. Shalhoub's sister Manar was shot dead three years ago as she attempted to stab an Israeli soldier. Tulkarm Governor Azzadin Al-Sharif said he had registered a complaint with the Israeli authorities over the incursion, which he said was a breach of the handover agreement. "They need to coordinate with us when they want to enter," adding, "This is against all the agreements." Israeli military officials said the agreement gave Israel the right to re-enter Palestinian territory in cases where a Palestinian attack was imminent. (AFP, AP, Deutsche Press-Agentur (DPA))

An IDF spokesman told *Israel Radio* that the closure of the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Israel and northern Gaza Strip was extended due to warnings that Palestinian militants planned armed attacks there. He did not specify how long the closure would last. (DPA, Xinhua)

Palestinian and Israeli security sources said that three teenagers had been arrested for throwing firebombs at cars on the road between Jerusalem and Hebron. There were no injuries. (AFP)

PA security forces began a campaign to impose law and order in the Gaza Strip. PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef met with officials in Rafah and Khan Yunis, where he reportedly said the security branches would soon begin joint night patrols. While they would not search houses for weapons, the security forces would confiscate guns displayed publicly. Nafez Azzam, an Islamic Jihad leader, welcomed Mr. Yousef's comments and said his group would cooperate with the security forces. Mr. Yousef also vowed to end street patrols by armed militants and threatened to use force to prevent them, which drew an angry reaction from Hamas. (AP, DPA, Reuters)

Khaled Al-Batsh, an Islamic Jihad leader in the Gaza Strip, called upon all Palestinian factions to re-evaluate the truce with Israel that was announced in March. Commenting on PA President Mahmoud Abbas' threat to use an "iron fist" against "those who would violate the truce," Al-Batsh told the Israeli-Arab website "Arabs48" that "the one which violates the truce is Israel not us." (Xinhua)

The Palestinian Authority expressed concerns that, in response to Israeli pressure, US Security Coordinator Lt.-Gen. William Ward might be replaced by another coordinator who could be more understandable to the Israeli interests. Israel had repeatedly accused Gen. Ward of "showing more understanding to the Palestinian demands to re-arm its security and police forces, the thing that worried the Israeli security establishment," said

Palestinian sources. Palestinian dailies had earlier reported that US Deputy National Security Advisor Eliot Abrams, who had visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory recently, had made critical remarks about Gen. Ward. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli media reported that the IDF had started to call reservists to participate in implementing the disengagement plan. They had been called to serve in the army for at least 21 days, with no specific date for the beginning of their service. The IDF had reportedly called 97 per cent of the reservists for the mission in what would be the biggest mobilization since the "Defensive Shield" operation in April 2002. The majority of the regular units in the IDF would go to a special training camp preparing for the disengagement plan. In addition, 17 battalions of Israeli border guards would be mobilized for the implementation of the withdrawal plan. (*Xinhua*)

The Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement James Wolfensohn held his first talks with PA leaders in Ramallah, including Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, Finance Minister Salam Fayyad and other ministers. He had met the previous day with Israeli Vice Premier Shimon Peres in Tel Aviv, *Radio Israel* reported. (*AFP, DPA, UPI*)

2

Israeli troops raided the village of Seideh before dawn and imposed a curfew. A shootout left a Palestinian and an Israeli soldier dead, the IDF said.

The Palestinian was identified as Shafiq Abdul Ghani, 34, an Islamic Jihad activist. He had been arrested by the Palestinian security services as a suspect in a February suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv night club that had killed five Israelis, and had fled from a Palestinian prison last month. Israeli media identified the soldier as Dan Talasnikov, 21. Seideh is one of several villages from which the PA had wanted Israel to withdraw when it handed over nearby Tulkarm to the Palestinian security forces in March. However, Israel had refused, saying the villages were full of militants, including those behind the Tel Aviv bombing. (*AP*)

Palestinian bulldozers demolished the homes of three senior Palestinian officers – a major, a lieutenant colonel and a colonel – that they had begun to build along the seaside north of Gaza City, after illegally seizing public land. The homes had been under construction for four months, but were not yet completed. The demolition was part of a new anti-corruption campaign announced over the weekend by the PA Interior Minister. (*AP*)

The Israeli Cabinet voted 13-7 in favour of the proposal by Education Minister Limor Livnat (Likud) to upgrade to university status the College of Judea and Samaria in "Ariel", the West Bank's second largest settlement. At present, the institution's examinations and awards of degrees are overseen by Bar Ilan University, near Tel Aviv, which had been targeted by British academics for a boycott because of its relations with "Ariel". The move still needs approval from the Council for Higher Education, where there was opposition to establishing a new university when existing institutions were suffering from budget shortfalls. PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia had criticized the move as a means to cement control over illegal Israeli settlements. (*AP, AFP*)

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told visiting US Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) that his Government "wanted to coordinate the disengagement plan with the Palestinians and make certain that the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is coordinated, without terrorism, and that Israeli property is transferred to the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, which would use it to serve the welfare of the Palestinian population. ... Significant talks on this issue had begun only recently." Mr. Sharon said that Israel had demanded that Hamas disarm before it participate in the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in the summer of 2005. "It is inconceivable for an armed party to participate in the democratic process; from there, it is impossible to move on to the [Road Map](#)," Mr. Sharon said. (*AP, AFP, Xinhua*)

US Senate Majority Leader Frist (R-TN) held talks with PA President Mahmoud Abbas. He described Mr. Abbas as a "bold leader" whom the United States encouraged to continue to lead "as we proceed along the [Road Map](#)." "He has shown tremendous leadership," Mr. Frist told reporters in Ramallah. During talks with Mr. Abbas, the senator said he "commended the President for his strong leadership, for his commitment to the Palestinian people and for his commitment to reforms," both economic and security. "It's been a pleasure to be here today to express the support of the President [Bush] and his Cabinet," he added. (*AFP*)

The Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, James Wolfensohn, met with senior Israeli officials and spoke of the need quickly to come up with short-term solutions and projects that would help boost employment in the Gaza Strip and bolster the regime of PA President Abbas. He proposed that Israel fill its 15,000 quota of permits for Palestinian labourers and ease the passage of Palestinian goods through the Gaza Strip crossings. He also briefed his Israeli interlocutors on his talks with PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Qureia, noting that he had discerned increased interest on the Palestinian side in coordinating the pull-out with Israel. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas' adviser, Ahmed Abdulrahman, said that Israel controlled 85 per cent of Palestinian water in the Gaza Strip, leading to the increase in the organic pollution and amounts of salt. (*Wafa*)

3

The IDF continued the closure of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank for the fifth consecutive day, PA security sources reported Tuesday. (*Xinhua*)

In Hebron, a special undercover IDF unit arrested Yasser al-Waridat, 32, and Mahmoud Amaira, 28. Three other Palestinians were arrested in Nablus. (*Wafa*)

Palestinians opened fire on IDF outposts near the "Neveh Dekalim" settlement and Rafah. No casualties were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz told *Israel Public Radio*: "There will be no new transfer of control [of Palestinian cities to the PA] as long as the question of the wanted terrorists is not addressed by the Palestinian Authority, which has not disarmed them." The PA Interior Ministry said in an official statement that Mr. Mofaz' statements were "part of the Israeli policy of delay and postponement." (*AFP, Xinhua*)

Prime Minister Sharon's aide, Raanan Gissin, said that Hamas must disarm before participating in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. He said the steps PA President Abbas had taken so far were not enough to convince Israel to move forward with the [Road Map](#). Palestinians could not move toward democracy if they allowed a group with a "private army" to participate in elections. (*Xinhua*)

Three Hamas members were released after being arrested by the PA security services while preparing to fire rockets at Israel in defiance of the current truce. The PA Interior Ministry said the release of the group, which had been detained on 2 May in the north of the Gaza Strip, followed a compromise mediated by Egyptian officials. "We have insisted on the necessity to respect the truce and warned that those who violate it will have to answer for their actions in line with the law," a ministry spokesman said. (*AFP*)

The PA Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, denounced the Israeli plan to construct a separation wall inside Hebron; upgrade a college to a university status inside the "Ariel" settlements and Israel's continued violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit agreement. It called on the US, EU, the Russian Federation and the UN for an immediate intervention to stop the Israeli plans and other attempts to impose new facts on the ground, which could preclude the establishment of a viable Palestinian State and the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. (*Wafa*)

PA Minister of the Interior Nasser Yousef urged leaders of Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip to honour the current truce, security officials said.

(DPA)

The PA planned a reform of the Palestinians' foreign representations, including sending all ambassadors over 60 into retirement, limiting their term to four years and preparing a new diplomatic corps law, PA Deputy Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah told *Voice of Palestine* radio. (DPA)
A PA report stated that Israel had committed 4,200 violations of the Sharm el-Sheikh ceasefire, killing 20 Palestinians, wounding 290 others and arresting more than 600. Israeli forces had committed 716 shooting incidents, carried out 1230 incursions into Palestinian cities and villages, and had set up 820 "flying" checkpoints. (IPC)

Whereas some 500 Palestinian prisoners had been released after the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings, 400 others had been arrested by the IDF, according to senior IDF officials. (Ma'ariv)

An Israeli military court sentenced an Israeli officer to four months in prison for the death of a three-year-old Palestinian child, Mahmoud Jaradat, in the West Bank in June 2003. The child, who was in a car with his mother and grandmother, was killed when Israeli soldiers, stationed at a military checkpoint in Barta' village in Jenin, opened fire at the car. (Wafa)

The PLO Executive Committee and senior Fatah legislators, who met to discuss the election law, had failed to reach agreement, participants said, suggesting that a parliamentary election set for 17 July might have to be delayed. Hassan Khreishe, the Deputy Parliament Speaker, said he did not expect the legislation to be passed for several weeks. The head of the Central Election Commission, Ahmed Dweik, said if elections were to be held on time the election law should be approved by next week. Mr. Dweik said despite the disagreements, preparations for the election were under way. He said those who had not registered ahead of the presidential elections in January could do so in the next two weeks at 1,000 registration stations. He said 1.1 million out of 1.8 million eligible voters had registered in January 2005. (AP)

Speaking after his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkey would actively lobby for a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, saying Palestinians should not be left in what appeared to be "an open prison." He said Turkey was ready to use its close ties with both Israel and the Palestinians to help mediate a peace deal. Turkey transferred to the PA Ottoman archives documenting land ownership in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, which included about 140,000 pages of documentation from the period between 1500 and 1914. (AP, Ha'aretz)

After meeting with James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, Jordan's King Abdullah II urged the US to support the Middle East peace process and help Palestinians and Israelis to reach a just resolution. Mr. Wolfensohn, on his part, highlighted the Jordanian role in consolidating the real peace in the region. (Petra News Agency, Xinhua)

At a meeting with businessmen, academics and public officials, PA President Mahmoud Abbas criticized Israel for pressuring him to confront militants and said: "Israelis want Palestinian blood to be spilled, and we don't accept that, this is a red line. We run our security in our own way, for our people's protection. We work day and night, there are obstacles, and progress is slow." Still, he said, "the Palestinian Authority is acting to prevent chaos and a proliferation of guns on the streets and in public places." Mr. Abbas also promised a referendum on any final peace deal and said Palestinians "would not accept anything less" than Israel's return to the borders it held before 1967. Mr. Abbas also held out hope for the dismantling of large settlement blocks At a meeting with businessmen, academics and public officials, PA President Abbas criticized Israel for pressuring him to confront militants and said: "Israelis want Palestinian blood to be spilled, and we don't accept that, this is a red line. We run our security in our own way, for our people's protection. We work day and night, there are obstacles, and progress is slow." Still, he said, "the Palestinian Authority is acting to prevent chaos and a proliferation of guns on the streets and in public places." Mr. Abbas also promised a referendum on any final peace deal and said Palestinians "would not accept anything less" than Israel's return to the borders it held before 1967. Mr. Abbas also held out hope for the dismantling of large settlement blocks in the West Bank, saying there was a precedent for settlement removal. He noted that Israel dismantled the "Yamit" settlement in the early 1980s as part of its withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula under the Camp David peace accord with Egypt. (AP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Wafa, Xinhua)

In Nouakchott, Mauritania's President Maouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya and Foreign Minister Mohamed Vall Ould Bellal met with Israel's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom. Speaking to reporters, Mr. Shalom said his Government would begin pulling out from the Gaza Strip in mid-August 2005. During the press conference Mr. Shalom reiterated promises to evacuate from Bethlehem, Qalqilya and Ramallah and to free Palestinian prisoners. In return, he said that Israel expected the Palestinian Authority to "dismantle terrorist organizations like Hamas and Jihad." Mr. Shalom said Mauritania could play an active role in the peace process through its excellent relations with Israel and Arab States. Mr. Shalom's visit was met with hundreds of protesting students who clashed with security forces. (DPA)

In a statement issued in Cairo, the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) condemned continued Israeli violations against journalists in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In the statement, FAJ said that killing, detaining and kidnapping journalists [were crimes] against humanity and a strict breach of freedom and principles of democracy and international law. (Wafa)

4

The IDF arrested six Palestinian and five Israeli activists that were protesting land confiscation and the construction of the wall in the Bil'in village, west of Ramallah. Witnesses said that Israeli pacifists from the Ta'yosh and Fawdaween movements had tied themselves to olive trees in an attempt to prevent the IDF from uprooting the trees. On its website, Gush Shalom published a public appeal for immediate action in support of the peace activists that were arrested during the demonstration. (Wafa)

Israeli troops killed two teenage Palestinians when an anti-wall demonstration in the West Bank turned violent. Two army jeeps entered Beit Lakiya, south-west of Ramallah, to confront Palestinians protesting the building of a section of the wall. Oudai A'asi, 14, and his 15-year-old cousin Kamal A'asi, were shot dead while throwing stones, together with other protestors. According to news reports, some 200 youths were at the scene and began throwing rocks at bulldozers and soldiers who arrived at the scene in a jeep. Palestinian witnesses said the soldiers initially opened fire with rubber bullets and tear gas grenades and then began firing live ammunition in the air. Sources said the cousins were hit by live ammunition. Oudai was hit in the hip and thighs and Kamal was hit in the chest. Nabil Abu Rudeineh, Advisor to PA President Abbas, said: "This is a violation of the ceasefire; Israel is looking for excuses to raise tensions and to depart from implementing the Sharm [el-Sheikh] understandings". Tawfeek Abu Khousa, spokesman for the PA Ministry of Interior, called on the Quartet to exert pressure on the Israeli Government to stop its aggression against the Palestinians and implement the agreements. He added that "There is a national agreement reached with all the Palestinian factions to continue with the truce with Israel." (DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Israeli border police troops arrested a Palestinian carrying a handgun near the border of Hebron. In the Gaza Strip, IDF soldiers arrested two unarmed Palestinians allegedly attempting to cross into Israel. (Ha'aretz)

Israel froze the planned handover of additional West Bank towns to the Palestinians, accusing Palestinian security forces of failing to honour commitments to disarm militants in the two towns already under their control. Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz decided on the freeze "because the thing most central to us that terror activity will not be launched from any town we hand over was agreed to but not implemented" by the Palestinians, according to Interior Minister Ophir Pines-Paz. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat called the Israeli move "a very unfortunate approach and decision." He said the Palestinians have been in touch with militants wanted by Israel and received pledges from them to halt violence. (AP, BBC)

In its monthly report, the Gaza Centre for Rights and Law said that during IDF operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the month of April

2005, at least 8 Palestinians had been killed and 183 wounded, including 32 children. (Wafa)

Some 60 Israeli university academics and activists staged a protest in front of the "Judea and Samaria College" in the settlement of "Ariel" against a Government decision to upgrade the college to a university. The activists, including members of "Courage to Refuse" who refuse to serve in the IDF, said they found it difficult to accept the creation of a university in "Ariel", which they considered occupied land surrounded by millions of Palestinians. (Xinhua)

Israel's Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, responding to a Knesset panel's warning against deploying Egyptian troops on the Salah al-Din ("Philadelphi") route on the Gaza-Egypt border, told *Israel Army Radio*, "I wouldn't depend on Egypt, no matter how much our relations warm up.

After all, we are asking the Egyptians to kill and be killed for us, to kill Palestinians and to be killed themselves. At the moment, I don't see a real solution." (Ha'aretz)

Rashid Abu Shbak, the head of the PA's Preventive Security Service, told a news conference in Gaza: "We have no intention of withdrawing arms of resistance." Mr. Abu Shbak said militants must still honour their commitment to the ceasefire agreed by PA President Abbas and should not take their weapons out in public. (Ha'aretz)

The Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee said that any deployment of Egyptian forces along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt would need the approval of the Knesset. Its approval was needed because a deployment would amend the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, according to the Committee, which voted eight to two. The Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee said that any deployment of Egyptian forces along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt would need the approval of the Knesset. Its approval was needed because a deployment would amend the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, according to the Committee, which voted 8 to 2 in favour of putting the issue to a parliamentary vote. (AFP)

World Bank Vice-President for the Middle East and North Africa Christiaan Poortman said the Bank was willing to back a temporary Palestinian institution to oversee the transfer of assets to Palestinians once Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip. He said such an institution would help ensure that settlement houses in the Gaza Strip were not destroyed and that Palestinians did not rush to occupy the houses. "We are willing to play an advisory role and willing to be a party associated with that, but we are not willing to buy or sell the assets," he said. He added, "The territories need to be allowed to develop into a place where people would like to do business and that would allow them to play their role in the international markets." (Reuters)

5

Palestinians opened fire on IDF troops near Rafah in the Gaza Strip. No injuries were reported. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF said Palestinians had opened fire at Israeli forces near the "Nissanit" settlement in the northern Gaza strip. No injuries or damage were reported. (www.idf.il)

IDF Central Command Chief Yair Naveh suspended a senior Combat Engineering Corps officer who commanded a force that had shot dead two Palestinian teenagers in the West Bank a day earlier. Mr. Naveh said the conduct of the deputy company commander was defined as "unreasonable." A military source told reporters that "the head of Central Command had decided to withdraw the commander from all operational activity until the full inquiry into the incident had been completed." (AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

Israel's Military Intelligence Chief General Aharon Zeevi praised PA President Abbas for his efforts to disarm militants. "There is a determined activity on his part in terms of his aims and intentions. Abu Mazen [Mr. Abbas] has changed the people in his office, has limited incitement, and made changes in the legal sphere." He also said, "He is succeeding to maintain the calm, even if it is fragile." (AFP)

Palestinians have begun voting as polls opened in 84 municipalities across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. More than 400,000 Palestinians would be entitled to cast their ballots to elect officials for local governments. This vote was the third and largest round of municipal elections since December 2004. Candidates from Fatah, Hamas and independent lists would be running for 906 local council seats in the 84 municipalities, including Bethlehem and Qalqilya in the West Bank, and Rafah in the Gaza Strip. Delegates from the Council of Europe and the US-based National Democratic Institute monitored the vote. (AFP, Reuters)

Director-General of Elections Executive Office Firas Yaghi said Israeli soldiers restricted the movement of voters in various municipalities. He said the IDF installed various checkpoints at the entrances of villages and prevented Palestinians from reaching the polling sites, adding that soldiers delayed the arrival of ballots for several hours in Bethlehem. (Wafa)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres said he believed Morocco could be the go-between to ease tensions in the Middle East peace process. In an interview with the daily *Le Matin*, he said, "As a friend of the State of Israel and the Jewish people, and as a friend of the Palestinians, Morocco can play an important role by helping create an atmosphere that encourages peace. Morocco could serve as a bridge between us and the Arab world." (AFP)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that the unemployment rate had increased by 2.7 per cent between the fourth quarter of 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The report also said that the percentage of Palestinians who did not work or seek work had increased from 31 to 31.7 per cent during the same period. (www.pcbs.org)

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

The Secretary-General was saddened to learn of the killing of two teenage boys in the West Bank village of Beit Lakiya yesterday. He took note of the suspension of the senior IDF officer involved, and welcomes the Government of Israel's announcement of a full investigation of the incident. The Secretary-General sends his condolences to the families of the victims.

The Secretary-General is concerned about the increase in violence witnessed in recent days. He hopes such incidents will not be allowed to undermine the positive developments of the past months. The Secretary-General emphasizes again that violence cannot provide a solution to the conflict, and that only through negotiations can peace be achieved.

(UN press release SG/SM/9857)

The US Congress imposed tight restrictions on the US\$200 million aid to the Palestinians that President Bush had announced in his State of the Union address in February. The emergency spending bill that lawmakers completed on 3 May makes it difficult for the White House to give any of the aid directly to the Palestinian Authority. Instead, assistance must be funnelled through non-governmental organizations. Also, it gives \$50 million to Israel to build terminals for people and goods at checkpoints surrounding Palestinian areas. Another \$2 million for Palestinian health care will be provided to Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. (The Washington Post)

In a statement presented to the Israeli High Court of Justice ahead of a discussion on the separation wall, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel said

that the route of the wall was a clear violation of international law as laid down by the International Court of Justice and thus it must be moved to inside Israel. (www.acri.org , *Ha'aretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

6

Palestinians fired four Qassam rockets at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. One of the rockets hit a building, which was empty at the time, and the other three landed in an open field. Several people were treated for shock. (*Ha'aretz*)
Palestinians fired an anti-tank rocket at an Israeli school bus carrying children outside the "Kfar Darom" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. The rocket did not hit the bus. Also, a mortar shell hit a settlement in the "Gush Katif" block in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported in either case. (*Ha'aretz*)
Two Israelis from the "Neve Tzuf" settlement in the northern West Bank clashed with Palestinians over the uprooting of an olive tree. One of the settlers fired in the air and the other attacked and wounded a Palestinian youth. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli troops arrested three Palestinian demonstrators protesting against the separation wall in the West Bank village of Bil'in, and arrested Salama Hasan Rashayda, 30, in the village of Arab ar-Rashayda near Bethlehem. According to the IDF, he was wanted for smuggling weapons. (www.idf.il, *Wafa*)

Unofficial results of the local elections conducted in 84 municipalities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on 5 May showed that Fatah won in 45 municipalities and about 56 per cent of the vote; Hamas won in 23 municipalities, including Qalqilya, Rafah and Beit Lahiya and about 33 per cent of the vote. Official results are expected on 8 May. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

The Greek Orthodox Church Synod, the Church's highest decision-making body in the Holy Land, dismissed Patriarch Irineos I over his alleged role in a deal transferring real estate in East Jerusalem to Israeli interests. (*AP*)

Secretary-General Kofi Annan informed the Security Council of his intention to appoint Alvaro de Soto as United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, with immediate effect. (*UN News Centre*, [UN press release SG/A/921](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/0005.sgsm10001.htm))

7

PA election officials postponed the release of the official results of the local elections saying the delay was unrelated to fraud allegations. Fatah had demanded that elections be reheld in Rafah and Beit Lahiya in the Gaza Strip, alleging election fraud. (*AP*)

Islamic Jihad militants killed a Palestinian suspected of collaborating with Israeli intelligence, the group said. The body of the 18-year-old youth, identified as Rami al-Malakh, was found outside his village near the West Bank town of Tulkarm. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said that the PA had submitted letters to the members of the Quartet, briefing them on Israeli violations of the understandings reached in February 2005 at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. (*IPC*)

8

In the Gaza Strip, two dozen masked Fatah gunmen briefly took over the local government building in Beit Lahiya, where Hamas militants reportedly won seven seats and Fatah six seats in recent local elections. They left at the request of Fatah officials. (*AP*)

IDF troops wounded five Palestinians in the town of Dura, south-east of Hebron, and arrested seven others in Burqin village, near Jenin. (*IPC*)

Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz signed an administrative detention order against an Israeli anti-disengagement activist, Neria Ofen, a settler from the "Yitzhar" settlement south of Nablus in the West Bank, on suspicion of involvement in planning attacks against Palestinians. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Justice Minister Tzipi Livni announced that Israel would not proceed with the release of an additional 400 Palestinian prisoners citing the increase in Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets in recent weeks. Prime Minister Sharon had said that Israel would not release any more Palestinian prisoners until the PA "fulfills its commitment to crack down on the terror organizations." PA Prisoners' Affairs Minister Sufian Abu Zaydeh called the decision a "clear avoidance to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh understanding." "We are making a 100-per-cent effort," he added. (*DPA*, *Ha'aretz*)

The United Arab Emirates' Minister of Information and Culture, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, inaugurated a housing project located east of the town of Beit Lahiya in the north of the Gaza Strip. The UAE-funded project includes 736 housing units and will house some 25,000 Palestinians who were rendered homeless during the intifada. (*Wafa*)

9

Palestinian militants and PA police exchanged gunfire in Tulkarm and Jenin. (*AP*)

The IDF attacked 30-year-old Siham Abu Akar and her relative while they were walking beside the separation wall in the village of Deir Al-Asal in Hebron. Mrs. Abu Akar suffered a miscarriage as a result of the attack. (*Wafa*)

The IDF detained a number of schoolboys for several hours on their way to school and beat them. The soldiers also fired gas canisters on tens of students trying to reach their schools in the neighbourhood of Beit Inyoun, north of Hebron. The Palestinian students responded by throwing stones at the soldiers. (*Wafa*)

Seven Israeli police officers were lightly wounded in clashes with Palestinian stone-throwers in East Jerusalem near Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Palestinians had been protesting over rumours that an Israeli group was planning to enter the holy site. The Palestinians were later dispersed with stun grenades. (*AP*, *Xinhua*)

Following their meeting in Moscow, the principals of the Quartet, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, issued a [statement](#) calling for progress of the continued efforts aimed at the full implementation of the [Road Map](#). The Quartet meeting was also attended by James Wolfensohn, its Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement. (www.eu2005.lu, www.mid.ru)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres cautioned that destroying Israeli settlers' homes in the Gaza Strip could jeopardize Israel's planned pull-out from the area. "If we destroy the homes, it will lengthen the process by three months, since according to international law we will need to clean up the debris," a task he said would cost some US\$60 million. "Then we have to find a place in Israel to dump it. This alone can spoil it," Mr. Peres said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel would have to rethink its planned pull-out from the Gaza Strip if Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections in July, Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said. "It seems to me illogical to move forward with the implementation of the disengagement plan as if nothing had happened," he added. (*AFP*)

The Palestinian Central Elections Commission announced the names of winners in last week's local elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but did not provide a breakdown by party affiliation. (AP)

Prime Minister Sharon told *Israel Television* he was taking into consideration a request from Israel's chief rabbis to delay the withdrawal from Gaza for three weeks until after Israeli worshippers ended their annual mourning and fasting on 14 August. Mr. Sharon said the pullout would start between 15 and 17 August. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat commented, "We want to coordinate but we find ourselves waiting for the next Israeli dictate, the next unilateral decision." (AP)

The Israeli military prosecutor issued an order for conducting a formal enquiry into the 4 May shooting death of two teenaged Palestinians in the West Bank village of Beit Lakiya. A military statement said the purpose of the enquiry would be "to clarify the circumstances of the death of the two Palestinian youths and whether the soldiers operated according to open-fire regulations." (AP)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, speaking in Ramallah at the "investment window" opening ceremony at the General Organization for the Encouragement of Investment, said Palestine was a fertile and promising land for investment opportunities in the different sectors and that the Government was committed to support investment there. He stressed that tax exemptions were insufficient to create a climate attractive to investors because "the main pillar here is ending the Israeli occupation and its daily oppressive practices against our people at checkpoints and city entrances and [its] actions taken against our national economy". Mr. Qureia said that investors' inability to obtain a visa or a resident permit was also a hindrance. (BBC, Wafa)

During a brief stopover in Dakar, PA President Abbas told the Senegal national television that the Middle East peace process was irreversible. "We have chosen the road of peace, the road of negotiations. It is irreversible." (AFP)

10

Armed Palestinians opened fire at IDF soldiers near the settlement of "Neve Dekalim", causing no injuries. (Israel Radio)

Armed Palestinians opened fire at an IDF post in the Gaza settlement of "Morag", causing no injuries. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli police raided and closed two Palestinian election offices in East Jerusalem, detaining three people and confiscating documents, police sources said. The offices were registering Palestinian voters for the July parliamentary elections, the sources said. (AP)

Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz told *Israel Army Radio* Israel must withdraw from the Gaza Strip, regardless of how well Hamas does in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. Mr. Mofaz spoke in response to Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's suggestion that Israel consider calling off the pullout if Hamas militants won the 17 July vote. "The disengagement is a complex, historic and heartbreaking move that puts the Israeli Government to a very difficult test, but is vital to its future," Mr. Mofaz said. "I think we must carry out the disengagement under any circumstances." (AP)

The European Commission [announced](#) an allocation of €28.3 million in humanitarian aid for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Lebanon. The funds would be used to provide food, water and sanitation services, as well as for income generation and health care for around one million Palestinians. Assistance will be channelled through ECHO, the Commission's humanitarian aid department. (<http://europa.eu.int>)

On the margins of the summit of South American-Arab Countries in Brasilia, PA President Abbas met with Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who praised the Palestinians for their "patience". Mr. Abbas told the Brazilian President he wished Israel would better comply with the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement, of February 2005, especially the release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. (AFP)

Speaking at the International Bible Quiz in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Sharon said that although the settlement enterprise was being rolled back in the Gaza Strip, Israel had fulfilled "a very significant part of its dream." Mr. Sharon said major settlement blocks, such as "Ma'aleh Adumim" outside Jerusalem, and "Ariel", deep inside the West Bank, would remain part of Israel, forming a territorial link. (AP)

PLC member Abdel Fattah Hamyel said that some 200 Palestinians wanted by Israel had been merged into the PA police forces of Tulkarm and Jericho. Mr. Hamyel, chief of the joint Israeli-Palestinian committee dealing with the issue of the militants wanted by Israel, said the merger came out of an agreement with all Palestinian factions, including the Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. (Xinhua)

The IDF issued a [statement](#) announcing the full closure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory for four days until the evening of 14 May, during which Israel would commemorate its war dead and then mark Independence Day. The closure would only be lifted for "humanitarian cases". IDF stated that the measure had been decided at the political level for security reasons. (AFP, DPA, www.idf.il)

An IDF spokesman [announced](#) the removal of a roadblock near the village of Ein Bidan, north-east of Nablus to allow "free access for Palestinians and merchandise between Nablus and Palestinian villages in the Jordan River Valley". "From the beginning of March 2005, 25 roadblocks have been removed in the West Bank", the spokesman added. (IMRA, www.idf.il)

State Department spokesman Tom Casey reiterated strong US support for Israel's disengagement plan, in response to a question about a possible link between that plan and Hamas winning the upcoming elections. "It's an important step on the [Road Map](#) and something that would pave the way towards the realization of the president's two-state vision," he [said](#), adding that the US was focusing on the practical steps "to help facilitate the withdrawal plan and the contacts between the Palestinians and the Israelis". (www.state.gov, Xinhua)

Speaking to Israel's Channel 2 TV, President Moshe Katsav said that while attending World War II festivities in Moscow the previous day, leaders such as President George Bush, President Vladimir Putin and Secretary-General Kofi Annan had expressed their fears that the Gaza disengagement plan would not go through. (DPA)

PA Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said on the sidelines of the Summit of South American-Arab Countries, "The peace process will not be able to continue if the Israeli evasions continue. If Israel continues to occupy the Palestinian territories and constructs settlements and builds a wall of separation and it continues not to respect its commitments [under the 8 February 2005 Sharm el-Sheikh summit] ... there will naturally be a deterioration in the situation on the ground". He also criticized recent statements of his Israeli counterpart Silvan Shalom that Israel would have to reconsider the Gaza withdrawal if Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections slated for 17 July. (AFP, Xinhua)

The PA Cabinet recommended withdrawing recognition of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I in Jerusalem, after the Jordanian Government endorsed Irineos' dismissal due to his alleged role in a contentious land deal. The moves were prompted by demands sent by certain clergy to Jordan and the PA asking that they The PA Cabinet recommended withdrawing recognition of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I in Jerusalem, after the Government of Jordan endorsed Irineos' dismissal owing to his alleged role in a contentious land deal. The moves were prompted by demands sent by certain clergy to Jordan and the PA asking that they withdraw recognition of Irineos. Officials in Prime Minister Sharon's office met with both Irineos I and the group that opposes him, but took a neutral stance, saying in a statement: "The Government of Israel recognizes the Patriarch Irineos but is not an adjudicator or judge between the two sides". (AP)

11

A report by the PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs showed that the number of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails had increased to 8,814, and said the IDF continued to arrest Palestinians despite a truce declared at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit in February 2005. It said the prisoners were living in very difficult conditions, with about 1,000 of them suffering from diseases and some in need of urgent surgery, but the Israeli prisons' administration had refused to offer them any treatment. The report urged the International Committee of the Red Cross to press Israel to improve the living conditions for Palestinian prisoners. (IMEMC, Xinhua)

Israel's Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz said there "won't be another postponement" of the start of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which was now set for mid-August. (AP)

In Brazil, PA President Abbas told the participants of two-day Summit of South American-Arab Countries that the Palestinians were "very keen to reach [a] just peace with Israel on the basis of full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab and Palestinian lands it occupied in 1967, as the latest Arab States Summit has adopted the comprehensive Arab peace initiative taken in 2002 by the Beirut-based Arab summit." Mr. Abbas also said it was good that Hamas would take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections and that if Hamas were to be successful it was the choice of the Palestinian people and everyone had to accept the results with respect. He questioned Israel's belief in democracy after an Israeli official suggested a victory for Hamas could put Israel's pull-out from Gaza at risk. On the margins of the Summit, Mr. Abbas met with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and assured him of PA support in disarming the Palestinian refugee camps, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

The Summit endorsed a final declaration, which recognized "the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation". It reaffirmed "the need for a realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people ... and for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on 1967 borders existing alongside the State of Israel." It also called on Israel "to pull out of all occupied Arab territories to 1967 lines," and urged "the dismantlement of settlements, including those in East Jerusalem." (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters, www.ipc.gov.ps, Wafa)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia told a conference in Ramallah organized by the PA Religious Affairs Ministry, "Jerusalem is in danger and the Arab world says nothing, it has not said outright 'enough, that's a red line'." "Everyday, Jewish extremists make calls to overrun the Al-Aqsa Mosque and all we have heard [from the Arab world] are faint-hearted words with no expression of support," he added. "They [Israelis] are going to withdraw from Gaza to better control the West Bank. They are going to leave four settlements in the Jenin area to Judaize Jerusalem," Mr. Qureia said, adding that in place of the "2,000 homes" to be abandoned in Gaza, Israel will build "3,500 homes in Jerusalem and another 4,000 in the West Bank". (AFP)

Defence Minister Mofaz told *Israel Radio* that Israel's security would improve after the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He also said he strongly opposed demolishing the estimated 1,600 private homes in the settlements after the evacuation of the settlers, warning it would unnecessarily prolong the withdrawal and put soldiers at risk. The Defence Ministry estimated it could cost NIS200 million to destroy the houses and remove the rubble, a process which could add several months to the pull-out, which is to take only one month. The pull-out "will allow us to keep control of the large settlement blocks in Judea and Samaria and to maintain Jerusalem as the unified capital of the Jewish State," Mr. Mofaz also told *Yediot Aharonot*, adding, "In fact, the settlers of Judea and Samaria and Gaza will be able to say in years to come that they helped establish the eastern frontiers of the State of Israel". (AFP, AP)

"Anything that persuades the Palestinians that we are being pushed by their superior will and their acts of terror to vacate one position after another emboldens terror and pushes peace further away," Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. "If the Palestinians sense a pattern of unilateral withdrawals under terror and without any Palestinian reciprocity, this poses a great danger to us," he added. "The greatest impetus to terror is their sense of impending victory." (The Jerusalem Post)

PA Prime Minister Qureia told a weekly Cabinet meeting that municipal and legislative elections were internal Palestinian affairs, which had nothing to do with Israel. Only the Palestinians had the right to choose their representatives in the elections, he said, in connection with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's recent comments. (Xinhua)

Israeli peace activists in Tel Aviv displayed posters of Palestinian children killed by the IDF during the past four years. The Anarchist Committee to Remember the Forgotten distributed the pictures to "remind Jewish residents of Israel of the losses whose names are not mentioned on Memorial Day". "We remember" in Arabic and Hebrew were written on all displayed pictures. (IMEMC)

Palestinians are planning to mark the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948 by sounding a siren throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an expression of mourning, Zakariya al-Agha, head of the PLO's refugee department said. Palestinians will also stand for a minute of silence to commemorate the Nakba. Mr. al-Agha said a special committee had been established to prepare for a series of events to highlight Palestinian refugees' right of return, including major rallies in Ramallah and Gaza City. (IMEMC)

The US Senate passed a bill authorizing a spending package of US\$82 billion, which would include \$200 million in economic and infrastructure assistance to the PA. The Senate approved the bill 100 votes to none, while the House of Representatives had given its approval a week earlier with 368 votes to 58. President Bush said he would sign the bill into law. (AP, DPA)

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported that the IDF had killed four Palestinians and wounded 14 others in the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the period 30 April to 6 May. It also reported that Israeli forces had continued to restrict movement of PRCS ambulances and medical teams, hampering efforts to transport the sick, particularly in Jenin and Qalqilya. (www.palestinercs.org)

12

Settlers entered two Palestinian villages in the West Bank and refused to leave when ordered to do so by the IDF. Settlers believed to be "Yitzhar" residents entered the village of Ruman, near Tulkarm. Some 40 Israeli students from the "Elon Moreh" settlement entered the nearby village of Ein Bidan during a march to the settlement of "Homesh." Soldiers arrested 20 settlers and took them to a police station in "Ariel" for questioning. (Ha'aretz)

IDF tanks and armoured vehicles entered the village of Ain Al-Bayda in the West Bank city of Tobas, broke into some houses and arrested three members of the Dababat family. In the Gaza Strip, IDF forces seized control of the building of the Al-Matahen Company (wheat mills) located north of Khan Yunis. Soldiers entered the building before dawn, forced the workers to gather at the second floor and took positions on the fifth floor, making it a military post, according to company engineer Ihsan Al-Farra. Meanwhile, the "Salem" military court, near Jenin, sentenced Farhan Abu Shallof to eight years, Moath Amarneh to four years and Momin Nabrisi to four months. They were charged with fighting the occupation. (Wafa)

The IDF handed Palestinian farmers notifications ordering them to leave their land. Fatah said the IDF was to seize at least 1,000 dunums (1 dunum = 1,000 sq. metres) of land in the villages of Bittir and Arqoub, near Bethlehem. Fatah called on human rights organizations and the UN for immediate intervention to end Israeli seizure of Palestinian land. (Wafa)

Witnesses told the Palestinian daily *Al-Ayyam* that the IDF had started removing greenhouses in the "Morag" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Thirty greenhouses had been destroyed and the settlement had been emptied of residents except for soldiers, witnesses said. (UPI)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS) said that 800 Palestinians had been arrested since the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit on 8 February 2005. PPS said in a statement that no significant changes had been made to Israel's arrest policies and that the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings had not brought about any positive effect on the alleviation of harsh detention conditions. (IPC)

Tayeb Abdel Rahim, a senior aide to PA President Abbas, called for a delay of parliamentary elections set for 17 July. Mr. Rahim said no decision had been made to postpone the elections but there were "legal, political and national reasons" to do so. He noted that the PLC had not yet passed a new election law it had been debating for several months. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said attempts to postpone the voting "might affect Palestinian relations." (AP, Ha'aretz)

The League of Arab States said it "will hold Israel, as the occupying force, responsible for any repercussions resulting from extremist threats against Al-Aqsa Mosque." It also urged the international community to "seriously deal with the continuous threats by extremist groups in Israel against Al-Aqsa Mosque." It called on the Security Council to take "necessary arrangements to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque and other Muslim and Christian sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." (DPA)

The Congregation of Palestinian Rights said Palestinian municipal elections had been free, honest and transparent. It concluded that the Palestinian Committee for Local Elections, as well as other parties, had been committed to the Palestinian law during local elections. (Wafa)

Speaking at a joint news conference in Santiago with Chile's President Ricardo Lagos, PA President Abbas said armed Palestinian organizations were participating in democratic reforms and the peace process, including the PLC elections scheduled for July. "I think this is the best way to achieve a relationship with the Palestinian organizations," Mr. Abbas said. (AP)

The US Episcopal Church, considering a review of investments in Israeli companies deemed harmful to the Palestinians, said that a high-level fact-finding team had come back "deeply disturbed" from a visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "Israel has a right to defend itself. But it appears that, in the name of security, injustices are being done to the Palestinians that amount to collective punishment," said Jacqueline Scott, a member of the Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns. The Church's Social Responsibility in Investments Committee is scheduled to issue a report to church leaders later this year on whether the Episcopal Church is profiting from its investments in corporations that help support Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories or that may be harmful in general to Palestinians. (Reuters, <http://ecusa.anglican.org>)

13

A 58-year-old Palestinian woman, Widad Mohammed Alkaud, died during an Israeli operation in Hebron. According to the woman's son, Israeli soldiers forced the door open at her home and the metal jamb crashed down on her head. An IDF spokesman insisted the woman's death was unrelated to the operation. "An Israeli unit was carrying out a routine operation in the neighbourhood when a householder asked the unit's soldiers to come to this woman's aid. ... They gave her first aid but she died nonetheless, apparently as a result of a heart attack," the spokesman said. (AFP, IPC)

The Israeli army said a mortar shell fired by Palestinians had landed near an army post in the southern Gaza Strip. Also, Palestinians had opened fire at an army post near the "Mevo Dotan" settlement, south-west of Jenin. No injuries or damage were reported in either incident. (www.idf.il)

Abdel Fattah Hamayel, PLC member, said the Palestinian Authority had collected unlicensed weapons of 110 militants in Tulkarm and Jericho. All 110 militants had signed a paper committing them not to return to armed attacks against Israelis, Mr. Hamayel said. The militants were subsequently drafted into the Palestinian security forces. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

In an interview with [the London-based daily] *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, PA President Abbas insisted that the PLC elections would be held as scheduled on 17 July despite calls for a delay. (AFP)

A Palestinian opinion poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre showed that 52.8 per cent of the Palestinians considered Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a step that could contribute to peace and 33.4 per cent believed it was harmful to it. The poll also showed 65.2 per cent of the Palestinians supported the "state of calm" Palestinian militants had agreed to maintain until the end of 2005. (Reuters)

14

Armed settlers from "Ennab" set fire to Palestinian farmers' crops in the Ramin village, east of Tulkarm. (IPC)

15

Four Israelis working to improve a fence along the [Salah al-Din ("Philadelphia")] route on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip were lightly wounded when an anti-tank missile fired by Palestinian militants hit the area. (AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz)

Palestinian militants fired mortar shells at the "Neve Dekalim" settlement and the "Gush Katif" settlement block in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no injuries. A Palestinian teenager was injured when Israeli soldiers fired at Khan Yunis following the mortar attacks, according to Palestinian medical sources. (DPA, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

Israeli soldiers shot and wounded two Palestinians near Ramallah. The IDF said the two had been throwing fire bombs at an Israeli vehicle. (Ha'aretz)

Traffic stopped and Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory stood in silence as sirens sounded at noon to commemorate the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948. Marches were held in observance of Nakba Day. (AP, The New York Times)

An Israeli army spokesman said Israel had authorized hundreds of Palestinian police to carry weapons in the Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, Jenin, Jericho and Tulkarm regions. Security sources also said there was a tacit agreement for the police to carry weapons in Bethlehem and Qalqilya. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

At its weekly meeting, the Israeli Cabinet extended and modified a temporary clause in the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law that had prevented Palestinians married to Israeli-Arabs from receiving citizenship. The clause was first instituted in May 2002 as a temporary security measure and is due to expire at the end of the month. Under the new rules, women over the age of 25 and men over 35 will be allowed to join their spouses in Israel and eventually receive citizenship. Some 200 Palestinians of the 1,200 who had applied for family unification before the temporary clause came into effect will benefit from the modification. (AP, DPA, www.pmo.gov.il)

16

A Palestinian armed with a knife was shot dead by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint near Tulkarm in the northern West Bank. An Israeli military

source said the man had approached one of the soldiers "with the intention of attacking him with a knife." "He refused to stop despite orders, followed by warning shots into the air. ... The soldiers then shot at him and he was hit," the source added. (AFP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters)

The IDF said Palestinians had opened fire at an army post guarding the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Also, Palestinians had opened fire at an army post securing the "Rafiakh Yam" in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported in either incident. (www.idf.il)

Palestinian militants fired at least five mortar shells at the "Gush Katif" settlement block, *Israel Radio* reported. There were no injuries. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli officials said Israel planned to start by the end of the month extending the West Bank barrier around the "Ma'aleh Adumim" settlement, east of Jerusalem, in effect expanding the city's boundaries and cutting off Palestinians from the city. The plan had been approved by the Israeli Cabinet in February but a date for the start of construction has not been announced. Shortly after completion of the "Ma'aleh Adumim" section, construction would begin on another section, connecting the "Gush Etzion" settlement block to Jerusalem from the south, officials said. (AFP, AP)

The Israeli High Court of Justice rescinded temporary injunctions imposed on construction works of the separation wall near the "Ariel" and "Immanuel" settlements. Palestinian villagers had filed petitions against four sections of the wall in the area, which would be constructed beyond the Green Line to encircle "Ariel" and nearby settlements. The IDF was allowed to resume the construction until the Court's next session on the petitions. (Ha'aretz)

A senior Israeli military official told *Israel Radio* that prominent Hamas officials recently elected in the municipal elections were holding regular contacts with the army liaison and coordination officers. "We must be cautious in ruling out Hamas. ... In the past, we ruled out the PLO, and later we agreed to speak with them," the official said. The contacts are confined to local issues such as commerce, electricity, water and sewage and do not deal with diplomatic issues, the radio said. (Ha'aretz)

Sheikh Hassan Yusuf, Hamas spokesman in the West Bank, categorically denied Israeli media reports that a security meeting had been held between Israeli and Hamas representatives. He said the reports were part of incitement against Hamas, and used to blackmail the PA to meet the Israeli demands. Sheikh Yusuf stressed that the movement would not be, under any circumstances, an alternative negotiator with the Israelis, as the dialogue with Israel was responsibility of the PA. (BBC Monitoring)

An Israeli security official told *The Jerusalem Post* that if the Palestinian Authority had confiscated the weapons of fugitives in Tulkarm and Jericho, then Qalqilya could be transferred to Palestinian security control in the coming week. At a cabinet meeting the previous day, Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz had announced that the joint committee on the status of fugitives was due to meet in the coming days. (The Jerusalem Post)

Five Israelis were arrested and later released in recent weeks on suspicion of planning an attack on Al-Haram Al-Sharif's mosques, with the intention of disrupting the disengagement plan, Jerusalem Police and the Shin Bet security service said. According to a police statement, the suspects said they planned to commit suicide after firing an anti-tank missile at the holy site and throwing grenades at police who would try to arrest them.

Israel's Justice Ministry said the suspects will not be indicted because there was no evidence that they had carried out any part of the plot. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Ekrema Sabri criticized the Israeli Government for releasing the extremists, saying that they should be put in preventive custody. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz)

PA Health Minister Zohni Al-Waheidi said Israel had buried 80 tons of nuclear waste near Nablus in violation of international law. (IPC)

PA President Abbas met with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Tokyo. At a joint news conference, Mr. Koizumi announced that Japan would contribute US\$100 million in aid to help the Palestinians after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Pakistan offered to mediate for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *The Nation* reported, but said it could play this role only if the parties concerned wanted it to do so. The offer was made by Foreign Office Spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani at his weekly press briefing in Islamabad, ahead of the 19 May visit by PA President Abbas. (www.nation.com.pk, *Xinhua*)

In an interview published in an interview published in *Folha de Sao Paulo*, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim said his country was willing to be a mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: "If Brazil one day gets to play a support role for the Quartet, everyone in the region has to deem this as positive." He also said the Summit of South American-Arab Countries, held on 11 and 12 May in Brazil, had not been targeted at Israel.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, in his radio programme "Coffee with the President", rejected US and Israeli concerns over the Summit. "We were not going to prepare an event of this magnitude to be against anyone. We did it for positive things. I said in my speech that, in the same way I am a defender of the Palestinian State, I am a defender of the State of Israel," he said. (*Xinhua*)

Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo, goodwill ambassador for the UNDP, made a series of appearances in Ramallah, including the inauguration of the UN Centre for Disadvantaged Youth there that will carry his name. He then went to Israel to meet athletes who play in a joint Israeli-Palestinian soccer league at an event sponsored by Peres Centre for Peace, founded by now Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres. (AP, DPA; see also UNDP News Bulletin of 10 May 2005)

17

Some 50 armed and masked members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades briefly besieged a PA police station in Hebron, firing their weapons in the air. (AP)

Mahmoud Hamdan Abu Sha'er died of wounds sustained in a 2004 Israeli incursion into the Brazil section of the Rafah refugee camp on the border with Egypt. (IPC)

An Israeli special forces unit disguised as melon vendors arrested four Palestinians in Bethlehem, one of them a Fatah member. Two other Fatah members, one a teenage boy, were detained in the Askar refugee camp, close to Nablus. According to *Wafa*, they were 15 and 19 years old. Another Palestinian was arrested in Sawahra, on the eastern outskirts of Jerusalem. In the southern Gaza Strip, Palestinians fired a mortar shell into the "Ganei Tal" settlement and light arms bullets at the "Selaw" settlement. There were no casualties in either of these incidents. (AFP, Ha'aretz, IPC)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef met with Lt.-Gen. William Ward, US Security Coordinator in the Middle East, in the West Bank town of Jericho, where Gen. Ward had attended a donors meeting, to discuss the Palestinian preparations for the Gaza Strip disengagement. "The Palestinian Authority has taken essential steps to... restructure its forces, to cause a single line of authority to exist," Mr. Ward said after the meeting. "That will enable a more effective mechanism for dealing with law and order on the streets as well as for combating terrorists." (AFP, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas concluded his visit to Japan with an agreement with Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura to hold bilateral ministerial meetings concerning aid to the Palestinians. Later in the day, Mr. Abbas arrived in Beijing for a three-day state visit to China. (*Xinhua*)

Coordinator of Israeli Government activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory Gen. Yosef Mishlav warned in a report, discussed on public radio, that it would be impossible for Israel to totally divorce itself economically from the Gaza Strip after the planned withdrawal. Gen. Mishlav, who was tasked with finding ways to help rehabilitate the Gaza economy, proposed that 15,000 Palestinian workers be allowed to continue crossing into Israel

from Gaza every day for the next three years. The report also recommended that the Government refrain from demolishing the settlers' homes in Gaza. (AFP)

PA President Abbas said at a news conference during an official visit to China: "The [July PLC] elections will take place on time, and for the moment there is no logical or feasible reason why that should change." "If they [Hamas] would like to participate in political life, and if they win enough seats in the legislative election, they're welcome to participate, even in the future government," Mr. Abbas said. (AFP, AP)

PA President Abbas said that, although in the past Washington had not offered direct financial support to the PA, he would ask the US administration directly to assist the PA, as the latter's financial mechanisms were now equipped properly to deal with any financial assistance. (IPC)

Malaysia criticized the Israeli Government for preventing former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad from entering Jerusalem and delaying him for up to an hour at a border crossing the previous day. "Jerusalem is not theirs ... It is an open town that anyone can visit," Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Najib Razak said. PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia criticized the Israeli action, while Mr. Mahathir told a news conference in Ramallah: "I hope that my next visit will be to Jerusalem, the capital of the Palestinian State." Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev said Mr. Mahathir's travel would have been expedited had he informed authorities in advance. He also said Mr. Mahathir did not ask Israel to visit Jerusalem and that the Government would have willingly coordinated his visit to the city had he asked. Malaysia does not have diplomatic ties with Israel and Mr. Najib said it was not "timely" to allow its people to visit Israel. Mr. Mahathir said the Israelis had also barred him from visiting Jenin, where he was to inaugurate a school funded by Malaysia. (AFP, AP, Bernama)

In Damascus, United Nations officials and representatives of the Syrian Government attended an open day event to review the achievements of UNRWA. Visitors discussed with UNRWA officials, including Lex Takkenberg, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Syria, the work of the Damascus Training Centre, schools and community centres. (www.un.org/unrwa)

18

A Palestinian was wounded by IDF gunfire near the West Bank city of Jenin, eyewitnesses said. (IPC)

Palestinian witnesses said IDF soldiers shot and killed a Hamas militant in the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. According to other reports, he was killed handling a bomb. Hamas issued a statement warning Israel: "The security you are enjoying these days will not last long if aggression continues against our people." (AP, Ha'aretz)

An IDF aircraft fired at a group of Hamas militants after they had fired four mortar shells at the "Gush Katif" settlement block in the Gaza Strip, the IDF and witnesses said. Hamas said one of its members had been critically wounded. (AP)

A Palestinian militant, Ahmad Shahwan, 25, died of wounds sustained when an Israeli drone fired a missile west of the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. Sources said the missile strike was aimed at a group of militants firing mortars at settlements. One settler was slightly wounded in one mortar attack. The PA Interior Ministry said Hamas militants had used civilians as shields, and eight Palestinian police had been hurt by rocks. Two Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israel, causing no casualties. (AP, Reuters, Wafa)

The PLC voted on a draft electoral law. PLC Speaker Rawhi Fattouh said PA President Abbas had informed him before the vote that he would still veto the legislation. (AP)

A Palestinian court ordered a partial revote in local elections in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Yunis due to voting irregularities. (AP)

PA Minister of Information Nabil Sha'ath said he had asked the Waqf Muslim religious trust and the PA Religious Affairs Ministry, which employ Ibrahim Mdairees, a cleric charged with making anti-Semitic remarks in public, "to suspend him, investigate him and prevent him from delivering further Friday sermons." (Ha'aretz)

PA Information Minister Nabil Sha'ath rejected an earlier Israeli suggestion to establish a tourist resort in one of the Gaza Strip's settlements after the planned withdrawal. (Xinhua)

The Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign said that Israeli authorities had handed Palestinians in the Bethlehem district new confiscation orders amounting to 770 dunums (1 dunum = 1,000 sq.m.) of land for the construction of the wall. (Wafa)

Gaza Strip settlers were given seven days to sign up for a scheme to relocate to the Nitzanim area in Israel after they were evacuated from their homes under the disengagement plan. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas signed five bilateral agreements in Beijing under which both sides agreed on economic and technological cooperation. During Mr. Abbas' three-day visit to China, he met and held talks with President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan. President Hu said the Chinese Government believed the way to establish an independent Palestinian State was by implementing the [Road Map](#). Mr. Abbas expressed appreciation for China's political and economic support. He said to build an independent State, Palestine needed practical financial assistance from the international community. Premier Wen told Mr. Abbas China was willing to help Palestine nurture and train more professionals. (Xinhuanet)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. (UN press release SC/8389)

19

IDF troops, for the third consecutive day of military training, set fire to Palestinian pastures near Tubbas in the West Bank, witnesses said. Palestinian shepherds said Israeli troops deliberately set fire to the pastures. In Yatta, near Bethlehem, troops arrested one Palestinian, taking him away to an undisclosed location. (Wafa)

Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz ordered the army to "use all necessary means" to strike at Palestinian militants firing mortars and rockets at Israeli targets. Security sources, however, said any response would be measured to avoid a serious escalation in the Gaza Strip that could complicate the planned Israeli withdrawal. Mr. Mofaz held consultations with top army and defence ministry officials after Hamas fired more than 38 mortar shells and three Qassam rockets in the Gaza Strip a day earlier. Seven mortar shells were fired at the settlement of "Netzarim" and a Qassam rocket was fired at the western Negev. No injuries were reported. (DPA, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat and Prime Minister Sharon's Special Advisor Dov Weissglas met to try to restore calm, according to official Palestinian sources. The official said the two talked about ways to rescue the truce, adding that there were tentative talks about scheduling a summit between PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon. (AP)

An Israeli soldier, who shot an unarmed Palestinian in the leg as he fixed an antenna on his roof in the Gaza Strip, was sentenced to 18 months in jail by a military court, the IDF said. (Reuters)

A Palestinian civil court ruled that municipal elections in the northern Gaza Strip village of Beit Lahiya must be reheld due to complaints of irregularities. Palestinian officials said the court's decision would be passed on to the Palestinian local elections committee, which would decide on a

date for holding new elections. In Rafah, results had been cancelled in 51 of 141 precincts. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

Israel's Defence Minister Mofaz called military commanders in for consultations and threatened that Israel would go back to targeting Palestinian militants. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said the group's informal truce with Israel was still in effect though "we are committed to defend ourselves in the face of any [Israeli] aggression in the West Bank and Gaza." (AP)

Prime Minister Sharon and Defense Minister Mofaz approved some measures of goodwill to the Palestinians, which would be brought to the cabinet for approval after Mr. Sharon returns from the United States later this month. The measures were steps to which Israel had originally committed during the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February 2005: freeing an additional 400 Palestinian prisoners, allowing the return of wanted Palestinians deported to Europe following the standoff at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity in 2002 and allowing the return of Palestinians deported from the West Bank to Gaza. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas left Beijing for Islamabad where he was received by President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. Mr. Abbas said, "We hope that President Musharraf will put his political weight behind efforts for a just resolution of the lingering dispute." President Musharraf responded by saying Pakistan would continue to support the cause of the Palestinian people at international forums. He also suggested to Mr. Abbas that Pakistan could help Palestinians in the fields of governance, defence and security. On the same day Mr. Abbas left Pakistan for India. (Associated Press of Pakistan, WAFA, Xinhua)

UNRWA held a two-day meeting with 27 of its major donors and host authorities in Amman to discuss the humanitarian assistance provided by the international community to the 4.2 million Palestinians "scattered" across the Middle East. At the meeting, UNRWA's directors presented the Agency's plans in the event of the removal of Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip. The United States announced a US\$20 million donation to UNRWA's Emergency Appeal for the West Bank and Gaza. Karen Koning AbuZayd, the Agency's Acting Commissioner-General, signed a Framework for Cooperation Agreement with Richard L. Greene, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration. (www.un.org/unrwa)

20

Three members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Resistance Committees Organization fired six anti-tank missiles, a mortar and assault rifles at the settlement of "Kfar Darom" in a third straight day of clashes, the IDF said. Two of the militants escaped, and the third was killed, the military said. No Israeli injuries were reported. Hamas said the operation was in retaliation for recent Israeli military strikes against Palestinians and confirmed that one attacker had been killed. (AP)

In Gaza, Palestinians opened fire twice at Israeli soldiers near Rafah and fired three mortar shells at the "Neve Dekalim" and "Netzarim" settlements, military sources said. Another mortar shell was lobbed in the direction of the western "Negev" but landed in Gaza, near the security fence surrounding the Strip, the military said. No injuries or damage were reported. (AP)

Fayez Sha'ath, Head of "Al-Quds Society for Developing Al-Mawasi", a neighbourhood west of Khan Yunis, said that for several days Israeli trucks had been removing "soft sand" from the beach at Al-Mawasi and transporting it to Israel. He added that Israelis dug at least 30 wells in the area, piping fresh water to Israel. (WAFA)

PA President Abbas arrived in India on a two-day visit for talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who reiterated India's support for the creation of an independent Palestinian State. Moreover, he met with President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and discussed the peace process, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Indian support to the Palestinian people. President Abbas also had a meeting with Sonia Gandhi, President of the Indian National Congress Party, and discussed developments in the Middle East peace process. (DPA, AP, WAFA)

Speaking in Jerusalem, Peter Mandelson, the European Union Trade Commissioner, urged Israel not to scrap free trade arrangements with Gaza when it withdraws from the territory. He said it was essential to maintain the so-called "customs envelope" adding, "A further deterioration in the Gazan economy after disengagement would manifestly affect the stability of the region and the prospects for further progress in the peace process". He said he had raised the option of using a third party to handle customs functions once Israel withdraws. Palestinian officials said they had no objections to using a third party but that Israel had so far refused to accept the proposal. (The Financial Times)

At the final day of the [World Economic Forum](http://www.weforum.org) held in the Dead Sea resort in Jordan, Nigel Roberts of the World Bank called on Israel to allow Palestinians to use the now-closed roads and the Gaza airport and seaport and to allow more Palestinians to work in Israel. (AP)

21

PA President Abbas said he would demand strong political and financial support when he meets with President Bush in Washington. "We are going to demand two basic things: the first is political support and the second is economic support," Mr. Abbas said upon arrival in Ramallah after a two-week trip. Mr. Abbas said he would also demand that President Bush declare a "frank American position on implementing the [Road Map](http://www.mfa.gov.il) after the Gaza withdrawal" this summer. Mr. Abbas was expected to ask Mr. Bush to intensify US pressure on Israel to freeze West Bank settlement expansion, a key Israeli obligation under the peace plan. (AP)

PA President Abbas met Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm el-Sheikh. The two leaders discussed the recent flare-up of violence in Gaza and Mr. Abbas' trip to Washington next week. After the meeting, Mr. Abbas commented on the recent violence: "The events are minor and they have calmed down; I think that the situation has begun to come under control in Gaza." (AP, Xinhua)

On the sidelines of the [World Economic Forum](http://www.weforum.org), Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres and PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia discussed Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Mr. Peres called the hour-long meeting a "good opportunity" to identify problems and suggest solutions. "There are real problems," he said, but added there was real resolve to solve them. In a later speech, Mr. Qureia said a Palestinian ministerial committee he headed had finished making arrangements for the "day after" the pullout. It would cover security, legal and economic aspects, he said, adding details would be provided later. (AP)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef said that Palestinian militants had agreed to stop firing mortars and rockets at settlements in the Gaza Strip, according to a PA official. Mr. Yousef had reached the deal with militants who had bombarded settlements this week in retaliation for the IDF killing of a militant under disputed circumstances. PA [Deputy Prime Minister and] Information Minister Nabil Sha'ath told reporters: "The Palestinian violence ends by ending the Israeli violence." He said Israel could not expect the Palestinian Authority to cause a civil war to stop the assaults. Mr. Sha'ath also warned against anything that falls short of a complete withdrawal from 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip and four in the West Bank. "A real peace cannot happen with Israel retaining the West Bank in return for a unilateral claimed withdrawal from Gaza; we have absolutely no assurance [this] is going to happen." (AP, Reuters)

22

A 14-year-old Palestinian boy wearing a belt with two explosive charges was stopped by the IDF at the Hawara checkpoint near Nablus, a military spokeswoman said. The boy was identified as Mohammad Mustafa Annadi from the Askar refugee camp. (AFP)

The leaders of the major Palestinian factions met in Damascus to discuss reforming the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and preparations for a larger meeting in either Cairo or Damascus. The participants included: Farouk Kaddoumi, the Secretary-General of Fatah, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, as well as the leaders of Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. (DPA)

Musheer al-Masri, Hamas spokesman in Gaza, told a local radio that Hamas welcomed any dialogue with any part except Israel, "only if this serves the Palestinian people's aspiration and interests." He said Hamas had received letters from both Washington and London "expressing readiness to hold dialogue with Hamas." Mr. al-Masri said representatives of Hamas had met several times with US and British officials. (Xinhua)

US First Lady Laura Bush visited several religious sites in Jerusalem and surrounding cities during which demonstrators launched several protests. Mrs. Bush said what she witnessed showed that passions were running high among Palestinians and Israelis. She visited the Western Wall and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. In Jericho, Mrs. Bush had lunch with a delegation of Palestinian women headed by Minister of State Hind Khouri who stressed the need to end the Israeli occupation and to fulfil President Bush's vision of a Palestinian State. Mrs. Bush said, "I want to encourage the people that I met with earlier and the women that I just met with that the United States will do what they can in this process. It also requires the work of the people here, of the Palestinians and the Israelis to come to the table, obviously." (AP, Wafa)

At the World Economic Forum, PA Civil Affairs Minister Mohammed Dahlan pledged to prevent attacks on Israel after the planned withdrawal, while Israeli Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert promised "substantial, tangible changes" in Israel's economic blockade of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel would cede control of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, handing it over to the Egyptians within a few months of Israel's evacuation of the border area. It would deny the reopening of a Palestinian airport in Gaza, even after the Israeli pull-out. Mr. Olmert also confirmed that Israel intended to bar Palestinians from working inside Israel by 2008. (AP)

In New York, Prime Minister Sharon gave a speech to American Jewish leaders while 1,500 demonstrators protested against the Gaza disengagement plan. (AP)

23

In comments published today, Hamas political bureau chief Khaled Mashaal stressed that the faction remained committed to the truce as long as Israel halted all aggression and released Palestinian prisoners. "We will retaliate against any violations if the aggressions continue and we have the right to defend and protect our Palestinian people. "If the Israeli side does not release them (prisoners), the calm will end and the resistance will assume its role to force Israel to release them," he said. (AFP)

The family of Hiba Ish'aq, 14, the youngest female prisoner in an Israeli prison, called on the PA and international human rights organizations to help free their daughter. A press release issued by the Prisoners Media Centre in Hebron said the young girl was wounded and arrested by Israeli soldiers in Hebron after she refused a physical search. (Wafa)

The Palestinian Central Election Commission said, in a statement, a parliamentary vote set for 17 July would have to be delayed because it needed at least two months from the time a new election law was ratified to lay the groundwork for voting. The commission said it could carry out the election on time only on the basis of the old law. It called on PA President Abbas to issue a presidential decree with a new election date as soon as possible. (AP, Reuters)

Hamas rejected calls by the Palestinian Central Elections Committee to delay Palestinian parliamentary elections scheduled for 17 July. Sheikh Hassan Yousef, a West Bank spokesman of Hamas, said the elections could not be delayed for "narrow partisan interests." "Everyone has to abide by what was agreed in the Cairo dialogue and to hold elections on the set date and to adopt the mixed electoral system," Sheikh Yousef told reporters. (DPA)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef presented Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz with a plan for deploying security forces in the Gaza Strip during and after Israel's withdrawal from the area. The meeting between Messrs. Mofaz and Yousef took place on setting up two new security coordination mechanisms for disengagement. Another meeting was planned with Mr. Mofaz requesting Mr. Yousef to bring maps of the planned Palestinian deployment, as well as details of the number of security personnel to be employed. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

A senior Egyptian security delegation headed by Mustafa Al-Beheiri, deputy to Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, arrived in Gaza to mediate between Fatah and Hamas. The delegation would also discuss current developments in internal Palestinian relations, said Ibrahim Abu Najja, head of the Follow-up Committee for Islamic and National Factions. He told *Voice of Palestine* radio the delegation would also examine "Israeli violations" of the truce. The delegation was due to meet leaders from Fatah in the evening and from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad on 24 May, Palestinian sources said. (AFP, DPA)

The IDF was interrogating a 20-year-old Palestinian man who ran up to a base near Bethlehem wearing a coat with wires dangling out and shouting "Hamas, Hamas," the IDF said. The troops then fired in the air to stop him, forced him to strip and removed the device, which turned out to be made up of old cellular phones and phone chargers, the army said. (AP)

The IDF wounded 15-year-old Akil Ahmad Al-Awawda, shooting him in his abdomen and arrested another boy in Hebron, witnesses said. Medics said Mr. Al-Awawda's condition was moderate. In another incident, witnesses said the IDF stormed Dura in south-western Hebron and opened heavy fire and hurled gas canisters at Palestinians, mostly schoolboys, near the municipality building and wounded a child. The IDF arrested 27-year-old Fouzi Abu Atwan of the Al-Tabaka village south-west of Hebron. Mr. Abu Atwan was released from an Israeli jail five months ago. Also, Israeli soldiers stationed at the entrance of Azzoun town, west of Qalqilya, prevented access to a Palestine Red Crescent Society medical team to participate in activities marking specialized medicine day. (Wafa)

In Ramallah, PA President Abbas met with Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In a joint press conference, Mr. Ihsanoglu said that the OIC supported the [Road Map](#) and called for the implementation of OIC and UN resolutions. Mr. Abbas told reporters that the Palestinian refugees issue should be discussed and solved according to UN General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. Commenting on Prime Minister Sharon's statements on rejecting the implementation of the right of return, Mr. Abbas said refugees was one of the final status issues and should be tackled through negotiations in accordance with the Road Map. (Wafa)

Speaking to Israel Bonds leaders in New York, Prime Minister Sharon said Israel would turn the [Salah al-Din ("Philadelphia")] route along the Gaza-Egypt border over to the Egyptians if they stopped Palestinian arms smuggling. He said this would be part of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. During this New York trip, Prime Minister Sharon said his Government "will not negotiate Jerusalem" and will not make any concessions over "the Israeli capital, which is united and indivisible for eternity." (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas left for Jordan and would proceed to the United States, after meeting with King Abdullah II. (DPA)

Wrapping up her Middle East tour, US First Lady Laura Bush said, "And I know from visiting women around the world, from visiting with Palestinian women this week and Israeli women this week that women want to be involved in civil society. Women want to be able to contribute to their

countries, just like men do, and that women want peace.” She was speaking to a group of women in Cairo, representing the Government, academia and cultural organizations. (AP)

The European Commission announced that it would deploy in early June an [EU Election Observation Mission](#) (EOM) for the PLC elections currently scheduled for 17 July. The Commission welcomed the holding of these elections as a further step in democracy building within the PA. The EOM would be led by Véronique de Keyser, Member of the European Parliament, its Foreign Affairs Committee and its Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries. In total, the European Commission planned to deploy a team of some 175 observers, which would be complemented by an observer delegation from the European Parliament and observers from other countries. Overall the mission should comprise more than 260 observers. (<http://europa.eu.int>)

24

At a checkpoint near Nablus, Israeli soldiers arrested a 15-year-old Palestinian boy who was found carrying two bombs, the IDF said. (AP)
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions reported that Israel’s Municipality of Jerusalem intended to demolish an entire neighbourhood - 88 houses - in the el-Bustan area of the Silwan village in East Jerusalem, occupied and expanded in June 1967, close to the walls of the Old City. The reason, according to Uri Shetrit, City Engineer, was that the area was an important cultural and historical site for “the Jewish nation” because it stood on the site where King David had established his kingdom. Four houses have already received demolition orders. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas told reporters in Washington: “We want from the United States a clear political position for the implementation of the [Road Map](#), as well as economic support.” (AFP)

The Palestinian stock market has been busy in recent months, boosted by some local companies’ encouraging earnings and the four-month ceasefire with Israel. Many women have reportedly sold their jewelry to buy stocks and men have become full-time investors. The Palestine Securities Exchange lists 26 companies with a total market capitalization of US\$2.7 billion. Hassan Adnan Yassin, general manager of the Nablus Exchange, said the trends were positive. The benchmark Al-Quds index had nearly tripled this year to 721 after a 54 per cent gain in 2004. Trading volume during the daily two-hour session was nearly \$8 million, from \$822,000 a year earlier. Investors overseas, particularly Palestinians living abroad, have begun to pour into the market, Mr. Yassin said. He added that the exchange’s sophisticated electronic trading system and its alliance with the global banking giant HBSC Holdings PLC had enabled foreigners to buy Palestinian shares. Samir Abdullah, a Palestinian economist, however, said that the market’s fundamentals were a bit misleading as some companies owed much of their strength to their monopoly positions. (AP)

Prime Minister Sharon said in a speech to the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee: “Upon my return to Israel I will present to my Government for approval the release of an additional 400 [Palestinian] prisoners.” The prisoners comment was “pure propaganda because he is in the United States,” PA Minister of Labour Ghassan Khatib told AFP in Ramallah. (AFP, AP)

The Holy Synod - the Greek Orthodox Church's highest decision-making body - agreed to divest the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Irineos I, of his title in connection with a land sale in East Jerusalem. (DPA)

World Bank President James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, said the PA would have to address financial management problems if it wanted to attract increased donor aid. “Financial management within the Palestinian Authority, which is currently under a remarkable Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, needs to demonstrate the sort of security of management and the prudence of management that I know he would want to exert,” Mr. Wolfensohn said. (Ha’aretz)

The Socialist International’s Council reiterated the necessity of implementing all the UN resolutions, especially those relevant to the Palestine question, and establishing the Palestinian independent State, during its biannual meeting held in Tel Aviv and Ramallah. (www.socialistinternational.org)

25

Palestinian militants fired at the “Rafiah Yam” settlement in the Gaza Strip. No injuries were reported. (Ha’aretz)

Mohammed Ghazal, a Hamas spokesman in the West Bank, said PA President Abbas wanted to postpone the PLC elections until November. He denied reports that Hamas had agreed to the postponement. A delegation of Egyptian mediators had been meeting with Fatah and Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip to try to resolve the dispute. (AP, Ha’aretz)

PA Minister of Housing and Public Works Mohammed Ishtayeh said the PA intended to demolish the settlers' houses in the Gaza Strip after an expected Israeli pull-out. “The settlers' houses do not suit the aim of the Palestinians' development,” he said, adding the PA would build roads linking Gaza City and the areas to be evacuated. (Xinhua)

In its 2005 report, Amnesty International said: “Certain abuses committed by the Israeli army constituted crimes against humanity and war crimes, including unlawful killings; extensive and wanton destruction of property; obstruction of medical assistance and targeting of medical personnel; torture; and the use of Palestinians as human shields. The deliberate targeting of civilians by Palestinian armed groups constituted crimes against humanity.” (www.amnesty.org)

According to the *Al-Bayan* newspaper published in Dubai, senior Hamas members claimed that the US and the EU had proposed that the group dismantle its military wing and stop all attacks against Israel, in exchange for the US and EU removing Hamas' name from their list of terror organizations. (Ynetnews.com)

In Washington D.C., PA President Abbas met with senior US officials and Congressional leaders in what he described as “a positive atmosphere.” He asked the US officials to adopt “a political position” that would ensure achieving the two-State goal envisioned by President George Bush. He also asked that “US economic aid be transferred directly to the Palestinian Authority,” adding that there was no reason for the money to be directed through non-governmental organizations. In Congress, Mr. Abbas met first with Republican Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. He then met with members of the House International Relations Committee whose Chairman, Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL), said, “a stable and peaceful Palestinian State is necessary to protect American interests and achieve long-term security in the Middle East.” After his meeting with both Houses of Congress, Mr. Abbas met separately with Vice-President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Ms. Rice told reporters that Mr. Abbas “has done some very good things. I think there is no doubt that this is a different Palestinian leadership than we’ve had in the past. He is a committed person.” Mr. Abbas also met with Democratic Representative Tom Lantos, who said Mr. Abbas “would get full support from Congress if circumstances would necessitate postponing the [Palestinian] elections.” (AFP)

In a press release, B’Tselem announced the publication of a new [report](#) entitled “Take No Prisoner: Lethal Shooting of Palestinians by Israeli Forces During Arrest Operations.” The report indicated that in 2004, Israeli security forces killed 89 Palestinians during action defined as arrest operations. (

IDF troops destroyed an animal farm and shelled a house in Hebron, according to witnesses. Soldiers went into Ethna near Hebron, seizing some of the farm equipment. Ahmed Tommezi, the farm's owner said soldiers, backed by military jeeps, entered the farm, vandalized it and held three men. Elsewhere, troops bombed the house of Harbi Masalma in Beit Awwa, west of Hebron. (Wafa)

IDF troops arrested Ezzat Al-Shoubaki, 25, a member of the PA security services in Hebron. He was arrested at a checkpoint, west of Hebron and led to an undisclosed location. Mr. Al-Shoubaki had been in an Israeli prison for 26 months and had been released in February 2005. (Wafa)

The IDF said Palestinian gunmen opened fire at an army post guarding the "Kadim" settlement, south-east of Jenin, and at the "Rafiah Yam" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Also, Palestinians fired an anti-tank missile at an Israeli force along the border with Egypt near Rafah. There were no injuries or damage in these incidents. (www.idf.il/)

A 12-year-old Palestinian girl was hit on the shoulder by a live bullet and seriously wounded when Israeli soldiers fired towards residents in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

Nearly all Gaza Strip settlers have agreed to move back to Israel as a group in connection with the planned Israeli withdrawal, including more than 1,000 families from the "Gush Katif" settlement block. They have signed a document expressing their willingness to be evacuated ahead of the Israeli withdrawal, if they could do so as an entire community. The signed document would be submitted to the Israeli High Court of Justice. (AP, Ha'aretz) Israel would complete handing back security control of five West Bank cities to the PA before its planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip provided the PA effectively asserted security responsibility over these cities, *Israel Radio* reported. Recently, the PA had convinced 17 wanted militants in Jericho and 45 out of 50 in Tulkarm to sign an undertaking committing them to refrain from further attacks against Israel. Israeli security sources said the PA had still not confiscated the militants' weapons. (DPA)

PA President Abbas met with President Bush at the White House. In their [joint press conference](#), Mr. Bush said: "Israel should not undertake any activity that contravenes the [Road Map](#) obligations or prejudices final status negotiations with regard to Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem. Therefore, Israel must remove unauthorized outposts and stop settlement expansion. The barrier being erected by Israel as a part of its security effort must be a security, rather than political, barrier. And its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities. As we make progress toward security, and in accordance with the Road Map, Israeli forces should withdraw to their positions on 28 September 2000. Any final status agreement must be reached between the two parties, and changes to the 1949 Armistice lines must be mutually agreed to. A viable two-State solution must ensure contiguity of the West Bank, and a state of scattered territories will not work. There must also be meaningful linkages between the West Bank and Gaza." Mr. Bush also announced that the United States would provide US\$50 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority "to be used for new housing and infrastructure projects in Gaza." (AFP, AP, Reuters, www.whitehouse.gov)

An official in Prime Minister Sharon's office said President Bush had rejected a request made by PA President Abbas at their meeting to skip Phase II of the [Road Map](#) to move directly to final status talks. (Ha'aretz)

In an interview with *Ha'aretz*, PA Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said President Bush is a strong president who can deepen US involvement in the peace process, and can press Prime Minister Sharon to carry out his obligations on freezing settlement expansion and dismantling outposts. He also said if President Bush did not find a way to end the conflict, "He can say goodbye to the American agenda in the Middle East and on democratization in the region and security in Iraq." Mr. Al-Kidwa criticized Mr. Sharon for commenting earlier in Washington that Israel did not plan to conduct negotiations on Jerusalem. Mr. Al-Kidwa said the statement was "ridiculous" and one which was an insult to Islam and Christianity. (Ha'aretz)

In a meeting with Hamas and Fatah leaders, Egyptian mediators failed to persuade Hamas to accept a court-ordered revote in three local elections in the Gaza Strip it had won - Rafah, Beit Lahiya and the Bureij refugee camp. However, Hamas leader in Gaza Ismail Haniya said after the meeting, "We agreed ... to adopt the language of dialogue as the only language to be used to solve differences, so we are going to have another meeting with our brothers from Fatah ... before we declare our final stand regarding the participation in the revote." (AFP, AP)

27

The IDF said a border police force had arrested a Palestinian armed with two knives who had approached a roadblock near the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. (www.idf.il/)

Israeli troops apprehended two Palestinians carrying Molotov cocktails who had approached the Kalandia checkpoint near Ramallah. (Ynet)

The IDF arrested a Palestinian youth carrying an explosives belt hidden in a bag at a checkpoint near Nablus. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

A mortar shell was fired at a settlement in the "Gush Katif" block, *Israel Radio* reported. There were no injuries. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli troops arrested eight Palestinians in Beit Liqya, south-west of Ramallah, during a predawn raid, according to Palestinian reports. (UPI)

Palestinians detonated a roadside bomb targeted at an Israeli armoured vehicle near the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Israel and the northern Gaza Strip, without causing casualties. (AFP)

Vice Premier Shimon Peres said Israel must dismantle more settlements in the West Bank after the pull-out from the Gaza Strip. "Facts will not allow Israel to rest on its laurels after the Gaza pullout, we must evacuate other settlements. ... It is inconceivable that all settlements remain," Mr. Peres told public radio. (AFP)

PA President Abbas [met](#) with Canada's Prime Minister Paul Martin in Ottawa. Mr. Martin said, "President Abbas' visit is of great importance and helps strengthen Canada's relations with the Palestinian Authority. ... It is essential that they coordinate the implementation of Israel's withdrawal and take maximum advantage of this opportunity. Canada believes in the two-state solution: Israel and a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security." Following the meeting, Mr. Martin announced C\$12.2 million (US\$9.7 million) in aid for Palestinians to be used for judicial reform, PLC elections, housing projects, border management, and scholarships for Palestinian refugees. Mr. Martin also announced that Canada would deploy 50 observers for the upcoming PLC elections. (AFP, AP, www.pmc.gc.ca/)

A survey published in *Ma'ariv* said 57 per cent of Israelis would support a compromise agreement under which Palestinians would be handed control of some parts of East Jerusalem, with 39 per cent against. The survey also said 58 per cent of Israelis supported the withdrawal of all settlements from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank, with 29 per cent opposed. The poll was carried out by an

independent institute from a representative sample of 500 and had a 4.1 per cent error margin. (AFP)

A [report](#) released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) said that working conditions for Palestinians had deteriorated last year, with the number of unemployed reaching a record 224,000, up from the previous recalculated record of 203,000 a year earlier. Unemployment had increased primarily due to the closures, checkpoints, roadblocks, permits and other aspects of Israeli occupation that hindered Palestinians from working, the report said. (AP, www.ilo.org)

28

A Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded by Israeli soldiers guarding the "Mevo Dotan" settlement, south-west of Jenin. "The gunmen drove past an Israeli army base and opened fire from their car. The soldiers returned fire and hit the three gunmen," an army spokesperson said. (AFP, AP, DPA, Reuters)

A 21-year-old Hamas member was killed and two others were wounded in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip when explosives they were handling blew up prematurely. (Reuters, Xinhua)

A 12-year-old Palestinian girl was attacked by Israeli settlers and sustained severe fractures and bruises while she was walking back to her home in Hebron. Witnesses said the settlers broke into several houses in the city, smashing property. (Wafa)

The PA said it was recruiting thousands more police to help secure the Gaza Strip after Israel's withdrawal. "We've begun to recruit the first contingent of 5,000 men in preparation for Israeli withdrawal. ... About 2,000 will be integrated in our police force and the rest will work on national security," a PA Interior Ministry spokesman said. The new recruits would not be armed because of Israeli restrictions on the number of guns Palestinian security forces could carry, said the spokesman. (AFP, AP)

The White House has expanded the mandate of US Security Coordinator in the Middle East Lt.-Gen. William Ward to mediate between both sides on security issues. Previously, Gen. Ward had been limited to assisting the Palestinian Authority as it rebuilt its security forces and specifically told not to intervene in discussions between the two sides. But US officials concluded that the two sides were failing to coordinate effectively and needed a third party's help to make real progress before Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, according to the report. (The Washington Post)

After one-day consultations, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah, said Council leaders supported efforts of PA President Abbas to resume peace talks that would lead to establishing an independent Palestinian State and stressed the importance of returning all occupied Arab lands to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. (AP)

29

Two members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Gaza City were killed when a bomb they were preparing exploded. Palestinian medical sources said four people were injured, three of whom were in critical condition. In the southern Gaza Strip, a 27-year-old Hamas militant was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade he was preparing for an attack against Israeli troops near the "Neve Dekalim" settlement blew up prematurely. (AFP, Reuters)

An Israeli soldier shot and killed a Palestinian who tried to stab him with a knife in Hebron. (AFP, DPA, Reuters)

Palestinians fired two Qassam rockets and several mortar shells at the "Gush Katif" settlement block, causing no casualties. Palestinians also fired at an IDF post in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no injuries or damage. (Ha'aretz)

The head of Israel's National Security Council, Giora Eiland, said Israel would reoccupy Gaza Strip cities next to Israeli settlements ahead of the planned withdrawal, most specifically the Khan Yunis town and refugee camp, if Palestinian security forces were unable or unwilling to prevent militants from firing on troops involved in the evacuation of settlements. A decision on whether to reoccupy the areas would be made in the days just before the evacuation scheduled to begin in mid-August, Mr. Eiland said. (AP)

At its weekly meeting, the Israeli Cabinet approved the release of 400 Palestinian prisoners as part of the understanding reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February 2005. Justice Ministry spokesman Jacob Galanti said the release could take place as early as 2 June after the names of the prisoners were published to give opponents a chance to object. (AP, www.pmo.gov.il)

Palestinian elections officials ordered partial re-elections to be held on 1 June 2005 in Rafah, Beit Lahiya and the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. (AFP)

30

An Israeli aircraft fired missiles near the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, destroying two rocket launchers and wounding three bystanders. The IDF said that it had carried out the air strike as militants were preparing to fire rockets or mortar shells and that militants preparing the attack had left the scene before the strike. Hospital officials said a man and two women, apparently bystanders, were wounded by shrapnel. Islamic Jihad said one of its cells, which minutes earlier had fired three rockets at an Israeli village just outside Gaza, had been the target of the air strike. (AFP, AP, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post)

In response to the Israeli air strike near the Jabaliya refugee camp, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said, "Peace agreements will only bring further losses and push back our cause. ... Israel's escalation makes the truce empty. We affirm the right to avenge this crime and to self-defence.

We ask the international community to intervene to stop this aggression." (AFP)

PA security forces in the Gaza Strip discovered a tunnel extending from Khan Yunis to the "Gush Katif" settlement block. The tunnel was 10 metres deep and 50 metres long. (Ha'aretz)

Speaking at the Seventh Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said a meeting between Prime Minister Sharon and PA President Abbas could be held "in a very short time, in a few weeks." (AFP)

31

The IDF said a mortar shell fired by Palestinians had landed in an open area inside Israel, near a security fence along the northern Gaza Strip. Also, Palestinians had fired an anti-tank missile at an Israeli force on the border with Egypt near Rafah, causing no injuries or damage. (www.idf.il)

Israeli soldiers stationed at the settlement of "Neve Dekalim" fired machine guns at Palestinians' houses located in Khan Yunis' western refugee camp, spreading a state of panic and horror among the residents, mostly children and women. They added that Mohamed Mkamer, 17, was moderately wounded when his left foot was hit by a live bullet. Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers backed by tanks and armoured vehicles, went into the Beituniya area in Ramallah searching houses and arresting three Palestinians. (Wafa)

Hamas said it would boycott the court-ordered revote in three municipalities in the Gaza Strip to be held on 1 June. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu

Zuhri accused Fatah of breaking promises made during negotiations facilitated by Egyptian mediators and said his faction had “the right to use whatever resources available to defend its victory.” (AP)

Israel’s Jerusalem Municipality has begun proceedings to raze 88 buildings housing some 1,000 people in the Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, occupied and expanded in June 1967. According to the City Engineer, Uri Shetrit, nearly all the homes marked for demolition had been built in violation of zoning regulations. If implemented, the demolition would be among the largest to take place in the East Jerusalem area since 1967. (AP, Ha’aretz)

The Palestinian Central Elections Commission postponed revoting in three Gaza localities. Voting in parts of Rafah and Beit Lahiya, as well as the Bureij refugee camp, was postponed with the agreement of Fatah after Hamas called for a boycott. Firaz Yaghni, the CEC Director said the postponement was declared “because of the tension in Gaza.” No date for the new local voting has been set. (AP)

In Tunis, PA President Abbas met with Tunisia’s President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Mr. Abbas briefed Ben Ali about his visit to Washington and discussed with him the latest developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the peace process. (WAPA)

At the [conclusion](#) of the Seventh Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Luxembourg on 30 and 31 May, EU, Arab and Israeli Foreign Ministers “stressed the need for both parties to fully implement their commitments according to the understanding of Sharm el-Sheikh” and “reaffirmed that no party should take unilateral measures which might prejudice the outcome of negotiations on a final settlement.” Ministers also “called for the rapid implementation of the [Road Map](#) and encouraged the parties to continue on the path of direct dialogue and negotiation in the fulfilment of the vision of two States, a safe and secure Israel and a viable, sovereign, contiguous, democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.” (www.eu2005.lu)
