

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

Monthly media monitoring review

July 2009

Monthly highlights

- G8 leaders call for the immediate opening of Gaza crossings. ([9 July](#))
- On the 5th anniversary of ICJ advisory opinion, UN Human Rights Chief, Special Rapporteur call on Israel to dismantle separation wall. ([10 July](#))
- EU High Representative Solana calls on the UN to set a deadline for the establishment of a Palestinian State. ([11 July](#))
- UK revokes five licences for military exports to Israel. ([13 July](#))
- Israeli veterans' group says IDF used Palestinians as human shields during Gaza war. ([15 July](#))
- UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine in Geneva examines responsibility to protect in the wake of Gaza war. ([22 - 23 July](#))

I
 Four Palestinian youths were injured by Israeli military fire near the "Tafaoh" settlement. (*MEMC*)

Two mortar shells were launched from Gaza and landed on the Palestinian side near the Karni crossing. No injuries were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Speaking at an interfaith conference held in Kazakhstan, Israeli President Shimon Peres invited King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to come to Jerusalem or to meet in Riyadh in order to initiate discussions that would enable the implementation of a comprehensive peace plan between Israel and all the Arab States. He praised the 2002 Arab peace initiative and quoted Jordanian King Abdullah II, who called the plan an expression of "a readiness for peace between the State of Israel and 57 Arab and Muslim States". (*Haaretz*)

A senior Israeli political source said that US President Barack Obama's recent meeting with the King of Saudi Arabia did not produce a commitment to encourage the other Arab States to begin normalization. "In such a situation, the Americans can't continue demanding gestures only from Israel, such as the demand that Israel freeze settlement construction". (*Haaretz*)

Fatah negotiator Zakareya el-Agha told *Wafa* that a sixth round of intra-Palestinian reconciliation dialogue had ended without agreement. Senior Fatah leader Nabil Sha'ath also confirmed that Fatah and Hamas had decided to end their sixth round of dialogue and meet again in Cairo on 25 July. (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*)

The blockade of Gaza was causing severe humanitarian hardship and the situation was getting worse every day, Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) told reporters in Vienna. "People are in worse and worse condition every day, especially those who were affected by the conflict in late December and in January... This is an urban environment, multi-storey buildings, people need all kinds of things in their homes, they need light bulbs, they need washing powder, children need new shoes – there are no shoes allowed in," she said. "These sorts of things defy logic and rationality," she added. (*AP*)

The IDF opened the Hawara checkpoint, in southern Nablus, to ease the passage of Palestinian foot traffic. Israeli soldiers would remain there in the interim and perform random checks on Palestinian pedestrians. The IDF also decided to partially open the Kerem Shalom and Nahal Oz crossing points into Gaza, while the Karni crossing would remain closed, according to Raed Fattouh, a Palestinian border crossings official. (*Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Municipality of Jerusalem handed out seven new demolition orders to Palestinians in the Wadi Hilwa neighbourhood of Silwan, despite saying earlier that it would freeze 70 per cent of demolition orders. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

At a press conference in Cairo, a senior Palestinian Muslim cleric, Sheikh Tayseer al-Timimi, urged Palestinians to travel to Jerusalem and perform pilgrimages to Muslim holy places, breaking a previous fatwa (edict) against visiting the city because it would be considered normalizing relations with Israel. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Supreme Court accepted a petition against an IDF lieutenant-colonel and a sergeant charged with shooting a bound and blindfolded Palestinian detainee during a protest in N'lin in the West Bank in July 2008, filed by the victim and four human rights organizations, namely B'Tselem, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, and Yesh Din. The Court ordered the IDF to press stronger charges against those concerned, who had been charged with conduct unbecoming members of the IDF and faced a maximum one-year prison term if convicted. (*AFP, Haaretz, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post*)

Local refugee camp committees in Nablus would launch a series of strikes until 7 July to protest what they say is insufficient aid and reduction in services to refugee camps by UNRWA, according to Ahmad Thouqan, the committee's coordinator in the West Bank. All UNRWA warehouses would be closed and the agency's vehicles would not be allowed to move. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A group of Palestinian and Israeli youths belonging to the Combatants for Peace group were attacked by a group of at least 14 settlers from the nearby "Avnei Hefetz" settlement south of Tulkarm. Israeli troops came to the aid of the settlers. (*Ma'an News Agency*) Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that Israel would consider a limited moratorium on new settlement construction, linking the step to United States efforts to bring Arab States into a broad peace process. The offer fell short of Washington's call for a total halt to building in settlements in the occupied West Bank. Mr. Barak met with US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell and described their talks as "positive" although there were still differences, but that the two sides were close to reaching a compromise. A joint statement said that they had discussed "the full range of issues related to Middle East peace". (*BBC, Reuters*)

Dozens of Israeli settlers took over farmland in the Kafr Al-Labad village in the northern West Bank. They erected three tents which serve as home to dozens of settlers. The land is public property owned by the Islamic Waqf and is located outside the village residential area. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Human Rights Watch published a report in which it accused the IDF of failing on six occasions to verify the targets of drone aircraft during the Gaza conflict in January, killing at least 29 Palestinian civilians. The report said that in the six incidents, "Israeli forces either failed to take all feasible precautions to verify that the targets were combatants, apparently setting an unacceptably low threshold for conducting attacks, or they failed to distinguish between combatants and civilians and to target only the former. As a result, these attacks violated international humanitarian law (the laws of war)". (*Haaretz*)

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A 17-year-old Palestinian girl was killed and 11 others wounded in the Gaza Strip when a shell fired by an Israeli tank exploded in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza. (*The Jerusalem Post, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

Israeli soldiers arrested the head of the Workers Union in Salfit, Yasser Taha, causing damage to his home during a violent search. (*IMEMC*)

Contrary to their announcement that they would stay out of four cities in the West Bank, Israeli troops launched raids in and arrested at least six Palestinians from Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem and Qalqilya. Troops also invaded Jenin in the northern West Bank. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, Palestine Press News Agency*)

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a donation of \$50,000 from the Mexican International Cooperation Fund for Development to support WFP Operation Lifeline Gaza. The contribution will help to provide food assistance to 365,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including 50,000 schoolchildren. WFP is also planning to start a food voucher operation in Gaza. (*MENA*)

Israeli crossings authorities were to allow 111 truckloads of goods and a limited amount of industrial fuel and cooking gas into the Gaza Strip. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

It was announced that the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt would be opened on a regular basis, three days a month. A World Health Organization (WHO) health officer said that some 800 to 1,000 people needed to travel from Gaza to receive medical care. (*IRIN, Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Salam Fayyad concluded in Washington, D.C., a series of meetings with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Adviser Gen. James Jones as well as with Congressional leaders in an effort to push the American Administration to act on its request that Israel halt settlement construction. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a speech to the Bundestag, "I think it is now important to get commitments from all sides and that includes the issue of settlement building", thereby aligning Germany with the positions of the European Union and the United States. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that the world had blown the settlements issue entirely out of proportion. He said that "the situation in the West Bank and the cessation of settlement construction shouldn't stop the international community's agenda". (*AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

Amnesty International published its first in-depth report entitled "Operation 'Cast Lead': 22 days of death and destruction", about the hostilities in Gaza in which it accused both Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes. The report accused the IDF of killing hundreds of Palestinian civilians and destroying thousands of homes during Operation Cast Lead, which amounted to war crimes. The report stated that Israel had used high-precision weapons to kill hundreds of civilians, including women and children, many of whom were shot at close range while posing no threat to the lives of Israeli troops. Amnesty also criticized Israel for not establishing an independent and impartial investigation into the conduct of its soldiers. The 117-page report also deplored Israel's alleged use of less-precise artillery shells and highly incendiary white phosphorous in densely populated areas, which is prohibited by the Geneva Conventions. It also accused the IDF of using Palestinians as human shields and frequently blocking civilians from receiving medical care and humanitarian aid. The report also denounced Hamas' firing of rockets into civilian areas of southern Israel. "Five months on, neither side has shown any inclination to change its practices and abide by international humanitarian law, raising the prospect that civilians will again bear the brunt if fighting resumes," concluded Donatella Rovera who headed Amnesty's field research mission. Both Israel and Hamas rejected the findings of the report. Hamas said that the report was "treating the victim and the perpetrator equally". (*AFP, Haaretz, IMEMC, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Palestine Press News Agency, Reuters, Wafa*)

Two members of The Free Gaza Movement, both Arab citizens of Israel, were released on 1 June from Ashdod prison in Israel following interrogation without charges. One of them stated that they had been placed in a warehouse where they had had to sleep on a cockroach-infested cement floor, as armed soldiers monitored them. Irish Nobel Prize winner Mairead Corrigan Maguire and US Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney were still in jail awaiting deportation. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, denounced in a [statement](#) what he described as "the unlawful naval seizure" by an Israeli gunboat of a ship carrying medicine and reconstruction material for the people of Gaza, saying the Israeli action "implements its cruel blockade of the entire Palestinian population of Gaza." He said it also violated article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibited any form of collective punishment directed at an occupied people. The statement said that Israeli authorities were informed, in response to their demands, that the boat had been inspected for weapons before departure from in Cyprus. (www.unhchr.ch)

The Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), an American-funded Middle East-based research centre, carried out an opinion poll of 1,200 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 12 and 14 June 2009. The results showed that the majority of the respondents said that US President Obama's positions represented "no change" or a "regression" from previous American positions on the issue of Palestinian statehood.

Some 65 per cent believed that his visit to the region would lead to a tightening of the closure on Gaza while another 62 per cent believed that it would lead to a reinforcement of the occupation. Only 14 per cent strongly believed that his visit would lead to a halt in Israeli settlement activities. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

3

At a northern West Bank military checkpoint, a 20-year-old Palestinian woman suspected of having a weapon was shot and wounded after refusing to stop as ordered by soldiers, according to an IDF spokeswoman. "The soldiers then realized that the Palestinian actually had a toy - a plastic

gun," she said. (AFP)

In Warsaw, UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd said that Israel had indicated it would pay compensation for UN buildings that had been destroyed by IDF shelling during the Gaza conflict. "We are now in the process of negotiating and we are putting very clearly ... the value of the loss," Mrs. AbuZayd said. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had said that he would seek compensation in the amount of more than \$11 million.

(Reuters)

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Israeli sources said that Palestinian gunmen opened fire at an Israeli military patrol near the Karni crossing east of Gaza City. The soldiers were reportedly in the area responding to reports of gunfire in the area. No injuries were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

In an interview with Australia's ABC Radio – National, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said that Australia would consider contributing forces to an international peacekeeping force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "We are always prepared to consider requests case by case," she said adding, "We have continuously assisted in the Middle East. Obviously I can't answer a hypothetical question about what would happen if we had a request, but if we did get a request, obviously we would work our way through it and consider it on the merits". (Ma'an News Agency)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that Jews remaining inside a future Palestinian State would enjoy freedom and civil rights. Speaking at the Aspen Institute's Aspen Ideas Festival, Mr. Fayyad said: "The kind of State that we want to have, that we aspire to have, is one that would definitely espouse high values of tolerance, co-existence, mutual respect and deference to all cultures, religions. No discrimination whatsoever, on any basis whatsoever." (www.aspendailynews.com)

Gazans celebrated the opening of a new water aquifer funded by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Al-Mughraqa area, south of Gaza City. The Al-Kawther aquifer, which met UNICEF standards of quality, would provide local residents, who suffered from highly chlorinated water and frequent shortages, with clean water. (Ma'an News Agency)

A spokesperson for UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband said: "We would be concerned if the stories of the Israeli Navy boarding the *Spirit of Humanity* in international waters were true," referring to the takeover of the Free Gaza Movement's aid ship. Noting that the issue of the legal status of Gaza's waters was murky, the spokesperson said that still the Foreign Ministry was looking into claims that the takeover of the ship and her 21-member crew violated international law. (Ma'an News Agency)

5

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a weekly Cabinet meeting that the Government had won a "broad national consensus" in Israel for the concept of a two-State solution. He said that the infusion of "real meaning" into the two-State solution was one of the most important achievements of his Government so far. "The Palestinians will have no choice but to recognize Israel as a Jewish State, the [Palestinian] refugees issue will be resolved outside of Israel, and Israel will be entitled to defensible borders with full demilitarization of the Palestinian State," he said. Listing his 100-days-in-office achievements, Mr. Netanyahu said they included "quiet in southern Israel and the power of deterrence". (Haaretz)

Speaking at the inauguration of a national park in Ramallah, PA President Mahmoud Abbas said that the Arab Peace Initiative "demands a just solution for the refugees in accordance with resolution 194". Referring to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's earlier remarks at a Cabinet meeting that the refugee issue would be resolved "outside of Israel", Mr. Abbas said, "When they say this solution is not on the agenda, they do not want to discuss any of the final status issues, nor refugees, nor anything else." (Ma'an News Agency)

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad condemned Israel's seizure of an aid vessel in international waters. "It was indeed shocking to hear about the detention of vessels carrying humanitarian aid and the abduction and arrest of the volunteers on board the Gaza-bound ships," he said. He is currently chairman of the Perdana Global Peace Organization. (Ma'an News Agency)

6

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on the first leg of a regional tour in Israel that an Israeli refusal to halt settlement building would hobble fresh hopes for the Middle East peace process. Mr. Steinmeier said after talks with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that a new US initiative to press for a two-State solution presented a unique opportunity the region could not afford to squander. "Everyone knows, without a stop to settlement building there will be no decisive progress in the peace process," he told reporters. He also met with President Shimon Peres and Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman, as well as senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat. (AFP, www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

During a meeting in London with US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said, "Israel committed to evacuating the 23 illegal outposts within weeks or months." Mr. Barak's entourage said that progress had been made during the meeting on several issues, including clarifying the status of construction in existing settlements and Israel's willingness to enter negotiations with the Palestinians and other Arab nations in exchange for a normalization of relations. "I think there is progress. There's still a way to go," Mr. Barak said, adding that he expected no imminent announcement on settlement building. (Ynetnews)

The Israeli Government had been using a system of grants and tax incentives to encourage Israelis to live in the settlements. First-time home buyers could receive a bigger mortgage if they moved to settlements such as "Itamar" and "Eli'on Moreh" than if they moved to the Israeli town of Ashkelon, according to the Israeli Construction and Housing Ministry. (The Jerusalem Post)

A number of Israeli settlers burnt more than 10 dunums of Palestinian land south of Nablus, including olive crops. (Ma'an News Agency)

In a press release, the European Commission said that Israel's expropriation of fertile land for settlements, roads for settlers and checkpoints contributed to strangling the Palestinian economy and made the Palestinian Government more dependent on foreign aid. "It is the European taxpayers who pay most of the price of this dependence," the statement said. (www.ec.europa.eu)

In Geneva, the Human Rights Council-mandated Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict had resumed its hearings. It heard the accounts of the Israeli victims of Qassam rocket fire. In addition, Noam Shalit, father of captive IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, appeared before the panel.

He blamed Hamas for the "violent abduction" and "continued detention" of his son and said that Gilad's capture was "a violation of international law". (AP, The Jerusalem Post)

The American Muslims for Palestine said in a statement that Israel had allowed a former US congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney, to return home days after detaining her and other activists on 30 June on board a ship carrying relief supplies for Gaza. (Reuters)

Israeli forces deported six British nationals from the Free Gaza Movement detained for attempting to deliver aid to Gaza. The humanitarian workers were expected to hold a press conference. (AP)

7

The IDF detained two young Palestinian men from Atil and Illar villages, north of Tulkarm, after raiding their houses. The IDF also detained 11 Palestinians during raids in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron. (MEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

Asked about Gilad Shalit at a news conference in Cairo with visiting Israeli President Shimon Peres, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said "Communications are ongoing. Shalit is in good condition. I hope that in the coming period, not in a long time, the Shalit issue will be closed."

(AP)

Top-level Egyptian intelligence officers arrived in Damascus to advance Egyptian-mediated talks aimed at reconciling Fatah and Hamas. They would meet with Syrian officials and Palestinian political leaders to “remove all obstacles and difficulties ahead of the resumption of [Palestinian] talks on July 25,” said Khaled Abul-Majid, Secretary of the committee representing the Palestinian factions in Damascus. Palestinian factions would also discuss the control of the security forces and the conduct of Palestinian elections with Syrian, Egyptian and Saudi officials, Mr. Abul-Majid said.

(DPA)

PA President Abbas arrived in Serbia on an official two-day visit, the first by a Palestinian leader in 20 years, for talks with his Serbian counterpart, Boris Tadić. Mr. Abbas was also to meet with Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković and Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić to discuss the Middle East conflict, the plight of the Palestinians and the situation in the Balkans and the world, Serbian media reported. (DPA)

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, expressed the League’s appreciation for the efforts of the United States to launch successful peace talks but said that negotiations could not resume amidst ongoing settlement construction. He stated further that the Arab stance for peace is based on the Arab Peace Initiative and that peace talks could not coexist with Israel’s settlement activities in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. Mr. Moussa said that US President Obama had extended his hand for peace and negotiations and that Israel should act in a reasonable way. (MEMC)

Israeli forces at the Erez crossing forced to turn back a 5-month-old Palestinian infant, his mother and sister, who had been given permission to receive treatment in Israel after Gazan doctors were unable to diagnose the cause of the infant’s chronic fevers. (Ma’an News Agency)

Between 68 and 78 truckloads of humanitarian aid, agricultural and commercial merchandise, including food, would pass into Gaza, as well as limited amounts of cooking gas and industrial diesel fuel, said crossings official Raed Fattouh. (Ma’an News Agency)

A group of Israeli settlers tried to take over a Palestinian-owned home in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. They were prevented from doing so by senior Fatah officials who had gathered in the house. The settlers came to the house accompanied by Israeli forces, claiming that it had been abandoned. The Palestinians present told them that it was Palestinian property. The settlers claimed that they had owned the land before 1948 and that they were the rightful owners. The proceedings relating to the case are pending in the Supreme Court of Israel and are expected to begin in September. (MEMC)

Israel had protested to the European Union (EU) over a statement critical of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The head of the EU delegation to Israel, Ramiro Cibrian Uzal, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry after the European Commission published a statement on 6 July, stating that settlements were “strangling the Palestinian economy” and perpetuating Palestinian dependence on donors. The Foreign Ministry said that the statement ignored the fact that the parties had agreed that the issue of settlements would be addressed in parallel with the fulfilment of other obligations and said that it was troubled by the implication that Israel’s security measures in the West Bank were unnecessary and even illegal, and did not take into account the activity of Palestinian terrorist groups. The European Commission was accused of ignoring sensitive security concerns and of exceeding its authority by making political declarations. (AFP, Haaretz, Ma’an News Agency)

Israeli settlers bulldozed Palestinian-owned land owned by farmers from Bureen village near Nablus, damaging olive trees and vines. The previous night, settlers attacked houses belonging to the villagers and set fire to animal sheds and small huts near the farmers’ homes. The same day, they set fires to summer crops and fruit trees belonging to the same village. (MEMC)

A representative of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), testifying in Geneva before the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, said that Palestinians detained by Israel during Operation Cast Lead were held in detention under “disgraceful” conditions and were subjected to violent interrogations and constant threats by the Shin Bet security service. According to the PCATI representative, Gazans had indicated that the IDF had held detainees in ditches that had been dug in advance. PCATI indicated that detainees testified to being held handcuffed and blindfolded with no access to restrooms, food or water. The interrogations by the Shin Bet included the use of physical and verbal abuse and threats to the detainees and their families. Some detainees were allowed very little sleep for days on end and claimed that they had been handcuffed in a painful way. (MEMC, Ynetnews)

The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, headed by Judge Richard Goldstone, completed two rounds of public hearings as part of its ongoing investigations. Judge Goldstone [stated](#) at a press conference in Geneva that this was the first time that such a UN fact-finding mission had held public hearings and that their aim was to show the human side of the suffering and to give a voice to the victims so that they would not be lost among statistics. He said that his four-member team had been shaken by the extent of the destruction in Gaza. He indicated that the Government of Israel was so far not cooperating with the Mission. (BBC, MEMC, www.ohchr.org)

8

In the early hours of the morning, Israeli troops invaded several villages in the areas of Ramallah, Hebron, Salfit and Nablus in the West Bank and arrested 13 Palestinians. (MEMC, Ma’an News Agency)

The Israeli army fined two Palestinians 500 shekels each for “interfering with Israeli police” when the two guided a European delegation through the streets of Hebron. The guides were accompanying the Mayor of the city and European delegates when settlers occupying Palestinian homes in the city began harassing the group. The guides stepped in to intervene and began yelling at the settlers. Israeli police arrived at the scene, arresting the two guides. (Ma’an News Agency)

It was reported today that in the course of June 2009, the Israeli army had arrested more than 380 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. (MEMC)

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel announced that Prime Minister Netanyahu had ordered that the Allenby Bridge (King Hussein Bridge) crossing between the West Bank and Jordan remain open 24 hours a day for imports and exports in order to help the Palestinian economy. Israel also said it would revive a number of economic projects, some of which had been stalled for many years, in order to shore up the Palestinian economy, which the Prime Minister had announced would be a goal of his Government. Three such development projects would be placed on the fast track: a French-funded light industry area near Bethlehem; a German-sponsored industrial park near Jenin; and a Japanese-backed programme to process and export agricultural products from Jericho. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters, Ynetnews)

A Palestinian man, Haleem Zo’rob, aged 44, suffering from brain cancer, who was prevented from leaving the Gaza Strip for treatment owing to the blockade, was pronounced dead. His death brought the total number of patients from Gaza who died as a result of the Israeli blockade to 349. (MEMC)

Hundreds of Palestinian children participated in a rally in the Gaza Strip to protest the blockade imposed by Israel, waving banners and chanting slogans against the blockade. The protest was organized by Hamas and took place in front of UNRWA headquarters in Gaza. The Hamas spokesman who participated in the rally criticized the lack of Arab action to break the embargo and rejected “the linkage of rebuilding the Gaza Strip to any other cases”. (Arab News)

Israeli forces at the Erez crossing refused entry into the Gaza Strip to a delegation composed of French and British physicians who were slated to perform dozens of surgeries and mentor in the hospitals of Gaza. The French organizer of the humanitarian mission described the move as violating the basic principles of international humanitarian law, [and] the obligations of Israel as the occupying Power. (The Guardian, Ma’an News Agency)

The Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt was opened in one direction in order to allow 40 Gazans to return to the Strip following medical treatment in Egypt and other countries. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Italian humanitarian organization UCODEP presented a new project to support the cattle breeders in the southern Hebron Governorate, funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), in partnership with the Palestinian Union of Agricultural Work Committees and Palestinian Livestock Development Centre. Breeders were facing a very difficult situation both due to the drought and Israeli settlements, according to the project coordinator, Francesco Rigamonti. (*Wafa*)

Limited quantities of fuel and 88 to 98 truckloads of food and other goods were to pass through the two open crossings into the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, met with a high-level delegation of European parliamentarians and Palestinian civil society groups in Brussels to discuss the Israeli siege on Gaza. The Palestinian delegation said that it was within the right of the EU to demand the crossings be opened and pressed Mr. Solana to speak with Israeli and Egyptian officials to secure their opening. The Palestinians also requested that the EU re-evaluate its recent decision to upgrade its trade relations with Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

It was reported in the Israeli daily *Maariv* that Israel and the United States had reached an agreement allowing Israel to build some 2,500 housing units already under construction in West Bank settlements, despite US calls for a freeze. The deal was said to have been reached during a meeting between the Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak and US Special Envoy for the Middle East George Mitchell. The arrangement would allow Israel to continue work on some 700 buildings already under construction which amounts to some 2,500 housing units. If confirmed, the deal would go against US President Obama's insistence that Israel cease all settlement activity. It was reported that Messrs. Barak and Mitchell had agreed that a complete halt to settlement construction would only come within the framework of regional peace negotiations, since Mr. Barak had been seeking a deal that would include initial steps by Arab States to normalize relations. Western officials said that the US was moving in the direction of making allowances so Israel could finish at least some existing projects which were close to completion or bound by private contracts that cannot be broken.

US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly denied the *Maariv* report, reiterating that settlement activity had to stop. (*AP, AFP, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Maariv, Reuters*)

It was reported today that two representatives of the Peace Now organization and members of an Israeli television crew were attacked last week by a settler who objected to their presence in the West Bank as they documented construction in the settlements. A security guard at the "Dolev" settlement snatched and destroyed the TV crew's camera and attacked the Peace Now members with stones. (*Haaretz*)

Egyptian sources indicated that negotiations on a prisoner swap deal involving the return of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit would resume where they had previously left off, although Israeli defence officials warned against exaggerated expectations. Hamas leaders claimed that they had received no formal information from Egypt about the resumption of prisoner swap talks and that a new list of prisoners for the swap had not been drafted. However, they did not rule out the possibility of returning to the negotiating table if Israel was ready to meet their demands. (*AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency*)

It was reported today that one week after his release from an Israeli prison, a Palestinian prisoner testified before a representative of the International Solidarity Institute for Human Rights that Israeli prison authorities made extensive use of solitary confinement as well as humiliation and torture. He said that the latest tactic used by Israeli soldiers was charging fines to prisoners for things like not washing the dishes on time or not walking fast enough, adding that one prisoner was ordered to pay an equivalent to \$130 for this type of "offence". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

9

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [said](#) that its contractors had begun clearing around 420,000 tonnes of rubble caused by Israeli bombing and fighting in Gaza earlier this year. "UNDP estimated that 15,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed between 27 December and 18 January. Clearance and crushing will take one year and provide 200,000 days of work. The total cost of UNDP's work was estimated at \$12 million. Canada had provided \$3.4 million and Sweden \$2.3 million towards the cost and UNDP is in negotiations to fill the funding gap," UNDP said. (www.undp.ps)

Leaders of the G8 called for the immediate opening of Gaza crossings to allow humanitarian aid, goods and people in and out of the territory, and the immediate release of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, in a [statement](#) at the summit in L'Aquila, Italy. They reasserted their commitment to a two-State solution and asked Israel and the Palestinian Authority to "fulfil their obligations included in the Road Map including the clear rejection of violence, terrorism and instigation to terrorism and a complete freeze on settlement activities, including their 'natural growth'". (www.g8italy2009.it)

The European Commission backtracked on a previous statement that settlements in the West Bank had "strangled" the Palestinian economy and checkpoints had constrained Palestinian economic growth. "The press release unfortunately uses wording which does not reflect statements by the EU Commission. [...] The wording of this statement is out of context [and] in our view, the reality is more complex than the statement depicts," declared EU Spokesman David Kriss. (*AP, Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz, Wafa*)

Israeli National Security Council Chairman Uzi Arad, declared that he did "not see a Palestinian leadership or a Palestinian regime, but a disorderly constellation of forces and factions." Mr. Arad, who is one of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's closest advisers, called Hamas a "huge terrorist infrastructure" in Gaza and said he did not think there would be a true peace. (*AP, Reuters*)

An Egyptian delegation headed by Gen. Mohammed Ibrahim, Deputy to the Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman, arrived in Ramallah to meet with PA leaders and officials of the PLO, Fatah and Hamas to push forward unity talks. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [said](#) that during the week the Jerusalem Municipality had distributed seven demolition orders against residential houses in the Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. During the first six months of 2009, Israeli authorities had also demolished 150 structures in West Bank's "Area C", mostly in Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley, and 35 in East Jerusalem, OCHA added. (www.ochaopt.org)

Palestinian and international organizations marked the fifth anniversary of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of 9 July 2004. More than 58 per cent of the wall, or a total of 413 km., had been completed and Israeli construction continues, according to [data](#) from OCHA. Another 10.2 per cent of the wall is under construction. The Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department reported that, once the wall was completed, Israel would get more than twice the length of the 1967 border. "As long as Israel is allowed to act as a State above the law, peace will remain elusive," declared Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO. (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa, www.ochaopt.org*)

During a press conference in Jerusalem on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, OCHA urged Israel to implement the ruling, as the wall “has had a devastating humanitarian impact on Palestinians”. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said: “The wall is but one element of the wider system of severe restrictions on the freedom of movement imposed by the Israeli authorities on Palestinian residents of the West Bank”. Ms. Pillay said that Israel must dismantle the wall and make reparations for all damage suffered by all persons affected by the wall’s construction. Israel built an additional 200 km of the separation wall since the adoption of the advisory opinion. OCHA stated that the wall severely restricted the movement of tens of thousands of Palestinians and that some 35,000 Palestinians were trapped in the “closed area” between the separation wall and the Green Line, some 10,000 of whom needed special “permanent resident permits” to enter the West Bank. In addition, Palestinians wishing to enter the closed area for family, economic, health or educational reasons needed “visitor permits” which are difficult to obtain from the Israeli Government. The Palestinian Authority called on the United Nations, the United States and the international community to pressure Israel into dismantling the separation wall in the West Bank. The Cabinet of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said at the conclusion of its weekly meeting that “the Court’s decision, which was endorsed by the UN General Assembly, determines that the fence and the settlements, including East Jerusalem, are illegal. We demand that the UN Security Council and the Secretary-General work towards ensuring that Israel implements the Court’s decision”. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) highlighted the continued construction of the wall in the OPT, Israel’s continued violations of international law, and the international community’s inaction as regards the obligations to ensure respect for international law and not to recognize the situation created by Israel’s illegal acts, which it described as tantamount to complicity. Oxfam published a report entitled “Five years of illegality. Time to dismantle the Wall and respect the rights of Palestinians”, which details the situation of 13 Palestinian communities affected by the wall. The Executive Director of Oxfam stated that “since the construction of the Wall and the setting in place of its associated regime, the deepening impoverishment and de-development of the Palestinian communities were undeniable ... depriving Palestinians of their livelihoods and of access to basic services”, adding that “as an occupying Power, Israel must guarantee the basic rights of the Palestinians”. Oxfam called on the international community to effectively challenge the wall, together with the construction of settlements and the confiscation and control of natural resources (land and water), which all de facto contribute to the altering of the demographic composition of the OPT and are in violation of international humanitarian law. (AFP, BBC, DPA, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post www.ochaopt.org, www.oxfam.org, www.pchrgaza.org, Ynetnews)

The European Commission (EC) plans to donate €5 million to the UNRWA Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) to provide critical food assistance to Palestine refugees in camps in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. This donation is in addition to the €39.7 million contribution that the EC, which is UNRWA’s largest multi-lateral donor, already provides to refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. “The plight facing Palestine refugees remains a key concern for the EU,” declared Roy Dickinson, Head of Operations of the EC office in Jerusalem. (www.unrwa.org) The international community should “define minimum applicable standards of human rights that go beyond national sovereign rights to determine how to absorb refugees,” declared Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, in an interview with DPA, as he suggested that either many Palestine refugees wanted to remain stateless for fear of losing the right of return or Arab host countries were generally unwilling to integrate Palestinians. “Occupying forces should be obligated to provide people normal lives while occupation continues,” he added. (DPA)

10

Israeli soldiers detained a Palestinian in Ramallah for interrogation. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israeli soldiers attacked Palestinian villagers and international and Israeli peace activists during the weekly non-violent protest against the wall in the village of Ni’lin, west of Ramallah. As the villagers marched towards the wall, undercover Israeli soldiers attacked them and beat up and arrested three local youth. The protesters were attacked with tear gas when they reached the wall and scores were treated for gas inhalation. Local youth subsequently started throwing stones at Israeli troops. (IMEMC)

Israeli troops attacked the weekly protest against the wall in the village of Bil’in, near Ramallah. International and Israeli supporters joined the villagers and representatives of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI) who were marking the 7th anniversary of the Initiative. They marched from the village centre after Friday prayers, demanding a halt to illegal Israeli settlement activity and the construction of the wall. Israeli troops fired a barrage of sound bombs, tear gas, rubber-coated steel bullets and so-called “bad smell” bombs. Two persons were arrested while dozens were treated for tear gas inhalation and vomiting. Among the persons affected was Palestinian parliamentarian Mustafa Barghouthi, Secretary-General of the PNI. (IMEMC)

Egyptian security forces seized 700 kg of explosives en route to Gaza, according to Israeli sources. (Ma’an News Agency)

The Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF was considering allowing the PA to train a special squad to carry out operations against Hamas and Islamic Jihad infrastructure in the West Bank. France had already offered to train such a team. (The Jerusalem Post)

The President of the World Medical Association, Dr. Yoram Blachar, a citizen of Israel, blasted the Physicians for Human Rights organization for giving a first aid course to persons protesting against the separation wall in the West Bank village of Bil’in, saying that “they had proved that they were a radical political group disguised as a medical organization”. The humanitarian group said in a pamphlet that it gave the demonstrators the course “in solidarity with their struggle against Israeli occupation”. A representative of Physicians for Human Rights said that “by not opposing the occupation, it is Blachar who is taking a political stand while claiming to be apolitical”, explaining that “not resisting occupation is a political action since it supports the occupation’s existence.” (Haaretz)

Egyptian authorities said that they planned to destroy a large amount of expired humanitarian aid bound for Gaza, including 680 kg of peanuts, agricultural pesticides and medicines. The aid had expired while the authorities awaited Israel’s permission to transfer it. (Ma’an News Agency)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told foreign journalists in Berlin that new settlements and the existing ones in East Jerusalem or the West Bank were “not acceptable” and remained an obstacle to the peace process, even though chances for peace in the Middle East were better than at any time in the past 15 years. “A solution has to be found ... but a solution will not be found as long as the settlements continue to be expanded,” Mr. Steinmeier said. (AFP, DPA, Reuters)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the Israeli Government to: “comply with the [advisory opinion](#) of the ICJ and dismantle the wall within the OPT and make reparation for all damage suffered by all persons affected by the wall’s construction; end the current regime of restriction of movement within, to and from the OPT, in order to ensure that Palestinian residents are able to exercise their rights, including their right to freedom of movement, right to work, right to education, and right to the highest attainable standard of health.” (www.reliefweb.int)

During an international conference held in The Hague, on the fifth anniversary of the ICJ advisory opinion, Richard Falk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said, “There will be no peace between these two peoples [Israelis and

Palestinians] until Israel shows respect for Palestinian rights under international law, and a good place to start would be with the wall.” Mr. Falk asked the world for renewed attention to the advisory opinion, adding, “This rejection of the rule of law with respect to the wall is part of a broader pattern of unlawful conduct on Israel’s part that includes the expansion of the settlements, a gradual engagement in ethnic displacement in East Jerusalem, and the imposition of a severe regime of collective punishment on the entire population of Gaza.” (www.ohchr.org) Egyptian sources told *Al-Hayat* that talks between Israel and Hamas on a prisoner swap involving Palestinian prisoners and Gilad Shalit would resume soon. (*Haaretz*)

11

Hamas security officials arrested two members of the Saraya al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Islamic Jihad, as they were engaging an IDF unit along the border and preparing to fire mortars into Israel. (*Haaretz*)

During a lecture at the Ditchley Foundation in London, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana called for the United Nations to set a deadline for the establishment of a Palestinian State. He said that the Security Council should recognize a Palestinian State even if no peace accord had been reached between Israel and the Palestinians by the deadline. Mr. Solana said that “after a fixed deadline, a UN Security Council resolution should proclaim the adoption of the two-State solution”, adding that this should include border parameters, refugees, control over the city of Jerusalem and security arrangements. He said that “territorial exchanges can be negotiated between the parties, on the basis of the 1967 line. The various territorial offers fluctuate between 6 and 2 per cent”... “It should not be impossible to find a figure. The parties can negotiate within this margin, not outside”. Mr. Solana said that the outline was already well known, detailed in the so-called Clinton Parameters and the Taba negotiations, and “even the Geneva Initiative”. Mr. Solana said that “[the Security Council] would accept the Palestinian State as a full member of the UN, and set a calendar for implementation. It would mandate the resolution of other remaining territorial disputes and legitimize the end of claims”. Advocating a return to Israel’s borders before the 1967 war, Mr. Solana said that mediators should set a timetable for a peace agreement, adding that “if the parties are not able to stick to it, then a solution backed by the international community should be put on the table”. Mr. Solana said that he strongly believed that the time had come to, finally, bring this conflict to an end. “The international consensus is there.” He praised Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “for finally generating an Israeli consensus” on a two-State solution. (*AFP, DPA, Haaretz, Ma’an News Agency, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

Egypt decided to temporarily suspend its efforts to mediate between Hamas and Fatah after the two parties rejected the latest Egyptian proposal to end their conflict and form a national unity government. A Fatah official said that the differences over the status of the Palestinian security forces and the possibility of forming a joint Hamas-Fatah police apparatus in the Gaza Strip had been among the main reasons for the failure of the mediation efforts. A Hamas spokesman in Gaza said that the talks with Fatah had failed because PA President Abbas and his team “were serving the interests of foreign parties”. He claimed that US security coordinator Keith Dayton and IDF officers were continuing to issue orders to Abbas’ security forces to arrest Hamas supporters in the West Bank. A Palestinian official announced today that PA President Abbas would ask Egyptian President Mubarak to postpone Palestinian reconciliation talks that had been scheduled to resume in Cairo on 25 July. (*DPA, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters*)

France’s Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told his Lebanese interlocutors during an official visit to Beirut that the United States had given Israel a six-month deadline to accede to its demand to freeze all construction in West Bank settlements. He said that “there are no middle-ground solutions for the settlement issue: either settlement activity stops or it doesn’t stop”. Mr. Erakat said that PA President Abbas had expressed that message in a letter to US President Obama on 11 July. The following day, Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat said that the PA would reject any deal between Israel and the United States that would allow even limited settlement construction in the West Bank. (*Haaretz*)

Judge Richard Goldstone, head of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, made a pledge during a television interview that the report of the fact-finding body would be fair, balanced and unbiased. He noted that the report would also deal with the 2006 abduction of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. Mr. Goldstone said that he had only agreed to head the Fact-Finding Mission after the President of the UN Human Rights Council had assured him that the report would be balanced. Responding to a question why the UN did not launch a probe into the years of Gaza rocket fire against southern Israel, Mr. Goldstone responded that Israel itself had not requested this in the UN Security Council. He also said that he had tried to persuade the Israeli Prime Minister to approve official Israeli cooperation with the Mission but that his request had been rejected. (*Haaretz*)

12

Former PA Minister of Prisoners’ Affairs, Ashraf Al-Ajrami, was held for more than three hours by Israeli soldiers at the so-called “Container” military checkpoint on the Wadi Nar road in the West Bank. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested a medical worker in the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he was ready to meet his Palestinian counterpart immediately to revive peace efforts. At a weekly Cabinet meeting, he said that “there was no reason that the PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and he should not meet immediately, anywhere in this country, in order to advance the political process”. Mr. Netanyahu said the same day that the recognition by the Palestinians of Israel as a Jewish State was key to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said that he was “convinced that the root of the solution is in the refusal to recognize the Jewish State”, “therefore, the key to peace is the explicit recognition by the Palestinians of Israel as a Jewish State”. (*BBC, The Financial Times, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters*)

PA President Abbas reiterated his refusal to resume peace talks with Israel unless Mr. Netanyahu’s Government accepted the two-State solution and agreed to freeze all construction in the settlements in the West Bank. “Israel must recognize the two-State solution and stop all settlement activities in order to resume peace talks over final status issues”, adding that, “the final status issues are settlements, Jerusalem, borders, refugees, water, security and prisoners”. (*BBC, The Financial Times, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters*)

Israel rejected the call by EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana that the Security Council recognize a Palestinian State by a deadline to be set by the United Nations, even in the absence of a peace agreement, which would effectively impose a solution to the Middle East conflict. Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that “peace must be built, not imposed”. He dismissed the remarks saying that he did not think that this truly represented the stand taken by the European Union but rather by Mr. Solana himself who planned to retire soon. Mr. Liberman said that “like anyone else in a similar situation, he too is attempting to make a few statements, to leave a legacy, to be remembered for some unique accomplishment”, adding that “everyone knows that the existing agreements in this region were never achieved by coercion but only by direct communication between the two parties”. A Foreign Ministry statement said that this novel idea would be “dangerous” and contrary to “resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations, the Road Map [peace plan] and agreements between Israel and the Palestinians all cautiously determined that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only be reached through negotiations by the sides”, adding that “Israel had called more than once for the immediate renewal of the talks without preconditions”. Israel stated that “another demand setting an artificial deadline endangered and harmed the chances of actually reaching a bilateral agreement between Israel and the Palestinians”. Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said that peace could not be “imposed from the outside” and that it would be problematic to enforce an imposed solution, adding that “this was complete nonsense” and that “nowhere in the world had the UN decreed a solution”. A spokesman for PA President Abbas said that UN recognition would be “one option if Israel derails the efforts of US President Obama’s Administration and its vision of a two-State solution”. President Abbas’ senior political adviser said: “We welcome these statements, which come within the framework of the responsibilities of the international community because the Palestinian issue was created by the UN partition resolution of 1947. If there is no progress in the bilateral

negotiations, then this position by Solana reflects a major [taking of] responsibility. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said: "We do not object. It's time for the international community to stop treating Israel as above the laws of man." (*AFP, DPA, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

Israeli police asked the "Samaria Regional Council" of settlers to demolish 11 illegal structures on its own accord. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu said at a public ceremony that "they [Palestinians] must abandon their demand to settle the descendants of Palestinian refugees in Israel and gradually 'eat away' at the State of Israel after a peace agreement is signed". (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

An Israeli military court in Beersheba sentenced a Palestinian to 20 years of imprisonment for firing home-made projectiles towards Israel from Gaza and planning other attacks. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

13

Israeli troops arrested three Palestinian civilians during pre-dawn raids in Tulkarm and Qalqilya. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli soldiers arrested a young Palestinian man near the Ibrahim Mosque (Cave of the Patriarchs) in Hebron on the charge of possessing a knife. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers raided the headquarters of the Nablus Shopping Festival in Huwwara village. Military patrols overran the area of the municipality square and ordered participants to remove banners and posters and told the organizers to cancel parts of the event, after Israeli officials had explicitly and publicly promised to ease Palestinian movement in the Nablus area in order to facilitate the festival. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli soldiers attacked an unarmed 16-year-old boy and threatened his parents near Hebron, according to a Christian Peacemaker Team observer.

The boy volunteers for the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem as a cameraman and had undertaken non-violence training. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Following a decision by the Parliament, the United Kingdom had revoked 5 (out of 182) export licences for military equipment to Israel because of Israel's actions during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza earlier this year. The British Foreign Office said that the exports would now contravene its criteria for arms sales. The UK said it does not sell weapons which might be used for internal repression or external aggression. The UK thus became the first country to halt arms exports to Israel in response to the Gaza offensive. A British embassy spokesman in Tel Aviv said that "there were no security agreements between the UK and Israel. UK policy remains to assess all export licences to Israel against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria", adding that "we judged that in a small number of cases Israeli action in Operation Cast Lead would result in the export of those goods now contravening the consolidated criteria. These licences have been revoked." While recognizing Israel's right to defend itself, Britain had characterized Israeli actions during the offensive as "disproportionate". Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman brushed off the sanctions, stating that "we've had many embargoes in the past... We can manage. This shouldn't bother us". (*AP, AFP, BBC, Haaretz, IMEMC, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, timesonline.com*)

In a radio interview, Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that as PA President Abbas' authority or legitimacy as the leader of the Palestinians deteriorated or declined, he raised his demands and toughened his position towards Israel. Mr. Liberman asked: "Whom does Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] represent exactly? In the best case scenario, half of his people". Mr. Liberman described "his demand to halt construction in the settlements as only an expression of his distress and inability". The comments followed Mr. Abbas' pledge that he would not give up on a right of return for Palestine refugees. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that Mr. Liberman's comments were an attempt to deflect attention from Israel's refusal to implement its prior commitments and obligations, including a comprehensive settlement freeze. Mr. Abbas' spokesman said that Mr. Liberman's remarks were an attempt to counter Israel's crisis with the United States by "manufacturing another crisis". (*BBC, Haaretz, IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities decided to open all three commercial crossings into the Gaza Strip. Between 52 and 62 truckloads of humanitarian aid were supposed to enter through Kerem Shalom, while limited quantities of industrial diesel and cooking gas would be sent through the Nahal Oz terminal. Several truckloads of fodder and wheat were scheduled to transit through the Karni crossing. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member and former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, Hatem Abdul Qader said that Qatar had signed an agreement to finance a legal affairs office in East Jerusalem to help Palestinians fight demolition orders. Qatar's funds would also pay for Palestinians' health insurance, tuition for students at Al-Quds and Al-Quds Open universities, and help to provide low-cost medications. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces destroyed parts of a 170-year-old Palestinian-owned home housing a family of 17 in the Bustan area, near the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. The police first arrived around 8 a.m., but seeing that a large number of people had gathered near the house, they brought troops and bulldozers around 11 a.m. Some of the persons who had gathered around the house were handcuffed. (*IMEMC*)

The Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem demolished a Palestinian-owned home in the Beit Hanina neighbourhood of East Jerusalem which housed eight persons and attacked the family which owned the house. One member of the family was arrested. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers from the "Beit Ein" settlement set fire to and destroyed Palestinian-owned land belonging to the villagers of Safa village near Hebron. They damaged 150,000 m² of land containing olive and almond trees and grape vines. The Israeli army stopped the fire brigades from reaching the land. The army only allowed Israeli fire brigades to stop the fire when it was about to reach the settlement. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli High Court of Justice ordered the State to carry out orders issued in 2005 for the demolition of two unauthorized settlement outposts, "Haresha" and "Yuval", in the West Bank. The ruling came after Defence Minister Ehud Barak told US officials that Israel would evacuate 23 outposts within "weeks and months, not years". (*Haaretz*)

An Israeli military court in the "Ofar" settlement charged a Palestinian human rights lawyer, Farid Al-Atrash, with assaulting a soldier while he attended a peaceful demonstration in the West Bank town of Beit Sahour on 15 April 2008, where *Ma'an* reporters observed Israeli soldiers attacking Palestinian demonstrators who were trying to prevent the setting up of a new settler outpost. A soldier tried to take a Palestinian flag from the lawyer. When he refused to give it up, he was accused of attacking the soldier. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd [said](http://www.unrwa.org) that UNRWA was grateful for the donation of \$34 million by Kuwait to help support refugees in Gaza. The Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, announced during the Arab Economic Summit held in Kuwait in January that Kuwait was pledging this amount to cover the entirety of the UNRWA original flash appeal issued in the first days of the emergency.

(www.unrwa.org)

14

Israeli tanks and bulldozers rolled into farm lands in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, opening fire at homes and destroying land. No injuries were reported. (*IMEMC*)

One day after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Quartet Representative Tony Blair visited Nablus, saying that the situation in the city was improving. During their meeting, Mr. Netanyahu had promised to ease restrictions in the West Bank, specifically allowing the new Palestinian mobile phone company Wataniya to begin operating within a month. Mr. Blair said that the operator could be working within two weeks. Nablus was one target of Mr. Netanyahu's pledge to make "economic peace" with the Palestinians. However, a day before Mr. Blair's visit, Israeli soldiers had raided the headquarters of the Nablus Shopping Festival, a celebration Israel had pledged to boost in the interest of economic improvement. Yet Mr. Blair said that Israel deserved more credit for its efforts to ease conditions for Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas signed an agreement with Dominican Republic President Leonel Fernández to establish diplomatic relations, during a meeting on the eve of the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Sharm el-Sheikh. (AFP, Wafa)

The World Bank signed agreements with the Palestinian Authority to pay \$33.5 million for development projects, including reconstruction in Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

IDF bulldozers razed more than 18,000 m² of farm land in the village of Urif, near Nablus, which is located near the settlement of "Yizhar", Ghassan Daghlas, the PA official monitoring settler activity in the northern West Bank, said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Peace Now group launched a new campaign under the banner "Settlements are not Obama's problem, not the world's problem, but your problem," calling on Israelis to push for a freeze on settlement construction. The movement said that the recently approved 2009 Israeli budget allocated NIS13 billion for settlement spending over the next two years. At a press conference in Jerusalem, the movement's chairman Yariv Oppenheimer said that "the Israeli public has been brainwashed that settlement building is in the national interest," adding: "We want to remind the Israeli public that settlements are a fundamental obstacle to reaching a two-State solution". (The Jerusalem Post, www.peacenow.org)

Work on the separation wall in the West Bank had slowed significantly since September 2007, after Israel had spent about NIS9.5 billion on its construction. Israel had halted work on the enclaves east of the Green Line that would have engulfed large settlement blocks such as "Ariel", "Kedumim", "Karnei Shomron" and "Ma'aleh Adumim". However, Defence Minister Ehud Barak remained "determined to complete the security fence, despite the delays," his office said in a statement. (Haaretz)

A group of American rabbis named Ta'anit Tzedek called for a Jewish Fast for Gaza to "end the Jewish community's silence over Israel's collective punishment in Gaza." The group called for lifting Israel's blockade and called upon Israel, the US, and the international community to engage in negotiations with all relevant Palestinian parties in order to end the blockade. It also aimed to provide humanitarian aid to Gazans. (FastforGaza.net)

(FastforGaza.net)

15

The Israeli military detained 12 Palestinians during raids in the West Bank. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

The Breaking the Silence group, made up of veteran Israeli troops, said in a report that Israeli soldiers in the Gaza war had been told to shoot first and worry about the consequences later and had used Palestinian civilians as human shields. The testimony of some 30 soldiers, all unnamed, showed that the massive destruction wreaked on the Gaza Strip was "a direct result of IDF policy," said the group. One said, "To every house we close in on, we send the neighbour in." Another said his commander had told him of instances when "the force would enter while placing rifle barrels on a civilian's shoulder, advancing into a house and using him as a human shield." Instructions received before battle led to trigger-happy soldiers, civilian deaths and massive destruction in Gaza, soldiers said. "No one said 'kill innocents'." But the instruction was that for the army, anyone there is suspect and should be taken down," one said. "I understood ... that it's better to shoot first and ask questions later," said another. (AFP, www.breakingthesilence.org.il)

In a speech at the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, PA President Abbas said, "We are pro serious negotiations.

Yet, flexibility on our side never means concession of our national principles. There will be no solution without Jerusalem, refugees and all final status issues." Regarding Palestinian national dialogue, he said, "We hope ... to reach an agreement that brings unity to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and, thus, get rid of Israel's pretext to evade their commitments." (Wafa)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair told *The Jerusalem Post* that Israeli and Palestinian officials continued to meet at a technical and expert level to move economic projects forward, even though there were currently no high-level political negotiations. Mr. Blair, who had met with Defence Minister Ehud Barak, Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon and Regional Development Minister Silvan Shalom, declared that there was some improvement in terms of security and economic cooperation. He also reasserted the necessity to ease the movement restrictions in the West Bank. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Washington Post reported that Hamas leaders Bassem Naim and Mahmoud Al-Zahhar had held talks last month in Geneva with former US Ambassador to Israel Thomas Pickering and former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in an attempt by the Obama Administration to gauge Hamas' positions on various issues. State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said that the US Administration's stance regarding Hamas had not changed, requiring the movement to accept the Quartet's conditions. (www.thewashingtonpost.com)

The 200-strong convoy of ultra-Orthodox Jews from Neturei Karta crossed into Gaza from Egypt in 50 vehicles carrying medical aid and humanitarian goods for children. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh met with the group and declared that Hamas' "problem is with the occupation, that stems from the Zionist ideology and its desire to disperse all the Palestinians." (Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

The International Monetary Fund said that the West Bank economy could strengthen significantly this year if Israel continued to ease restrictions on Palestinian trade and movement in the territory. A Summary of Findings by the IMF Mission to the West Bank and Gaza said that the economy in the West Bank could grow by as much as 7 per cent in 2009. It predicted a 3 per cent inflation rate. "This would represent the first significant improvement in living standards in the West Bank since 2006," said Oussama Kanaan, the IMF representative in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

"However, if the relaxation of Israeli restrictions does not continue in the remainder of the year, real GDP per capita would decline further in 2009, along the same trend started in 2006," he said in a statement. In the Gaza Strip, poverty and unemployment will deepen unless Israel relaxes its blockade of the territory, he added. The IMF put unemployment at about 20 per cent in the West Bank and 34 per cent in the Gaza Strip. (Reuters)

Armed Israeli settlers descended on a Palestinian home under construction near Tulkarm, ransacking the building and destroying construction equipment. (Ma'an News Agency)

In a report sponsored by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), a Palestinian human rights group, the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, described Israeli mistreatment of Palestinian female prisoners, saying that the women prisoners were held in Israeli prisons and detention centres designed for men which did not respond to female needs. "[Pregnant detainees] do not enjoy preferential treatment in terms of diet, living space or transfer to hospitals. ... Pregnant prisoners are also chained to their beds until they enter delivery rooms and shackled once again after giving birth," the group said. (AFP)

Estonia's Foreign Ministry said that the first part of the Ministry's development aid project for introducing the Palestinian Authority to Estonia's experiences in developing e-Governance had concluded earlier this week. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said, "Using up-to-date information and communication technology solutions will help with establishing essential e-services for citizens, and this will help the establishment of good and transparent governing standards." The project will continue in September with 20 director-level PA officials coming to Estonia for a week of training at the e-Governance Academy. (www.mfa.ee)

Israeli Forces arrested nine Palestinians in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin and Jericho. (*WAFPA*)

The first rocket fired from Gaza in more than a month landed in southern Israel without causing injury or damage, the IDF said. The rocket was fired from the Shujaiya district of Gaza City and landed near the Nahal Oz kibbutz, according to a military spokesman. (*AFP*)

Speaking in Parliament, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called on Israel to freeze settlement construction in the West Bank in order to restart the peace process in the region. Mr. Brown said, "All of us are putting pressure [on Israel], recognizing of course that Israel must have guarantees about its security, recognizing that a Palestinian State cannot be viable unless it is economically viable." (*Haaretz*)

Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad pledged to raise more than \$700,000 in his country to help international activists seeking to challenge Israel's naval blockade of Gaza. He met with members of the Free Gaza Movement, saying that the money would be used to buy a small cargo vessel and a passenger boat. (*AP*)

American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) announced the launch of a renovation project in 10 pre-schools in Gaza. OCHA has granted ANERA more than \$93,000 to carry out the five-month project that will affect approximately 1,800 preschoolers in vulnerable and war-damaged communities. (www.anera.org)

Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu was working against a Knesset bill that would prevent Palestinian prisoners from Hamas from receiving visitors until IDF soldier Gilad Shalit was released, Likud sources said. They said that Mr. Netanyahu opposed the bill because it could complicate negotiations on prisoners' exchange and harm Israel's image abroad. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

17

In Gaza, an Israeli military vehicle entered an area near Beit Hanoun, burning 150 dunums of land and destroying an agricultural field of wheat and barley crops. This was the IDF's deepest incursion into Gaza in months. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas, on a two-day visit to Turkey, held talks with Turkish President Abdullah Gül and inaugurated a new Palestinian embassy building. At a joint press conference in Ankara, Mr. Gül stressed the necessity of a two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian State. He also said that the Israeli blockade on Gaza should be lifted immediately. On his part, President Abbas said that Israel was not respecting international law and urged the Israeli Government to freeze construction of settlements. (*AFP*)

At the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, leaders vowed in a final communiqué to continue exerting efforts to achieve just and total peace in the Middle East. They voiced solidarity with the Palestinian people's inalienable rights of self-determination, Palestinian refugees' right of return and a viable State with Jerusalem as its capital. They condemned all illegitimate Israeli settlement activities and Israeli attempts to change the legal status and demographic structure of Jerusalem. ([NNN-KUNA](http://www.nnn-kuna.com))

Egypt repaired and sent back a generator to the Gaza power plant, according to power plant chief Jamal Ad-Dardasawi. Once re-installed, the 70-megawatt machine would "provide a noticeable improvement in services for Gazans, particularly in Gaza City", he said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A PLO Negotiations Affairs Department report, focusing on Israeli settlement outposts, said that outposts were "no different" than settlements, in that they took up Palestinian land and were even more illegal than their parent settlements. The report, which pointed out Israel's failure to meet its road map obligations, said the settlement outposts were detrimental to any possible continuation of peace talks in the future. (www.nad-plo.org)

Israeli settlers vowed to respond to US President Obama's stance against Israeli settlements by rebuilding the settlement of "Homesh" in the northern West Bank, which had been evacuated in 2005. Settler leaders published a message to President Obama, criticizing him for his pressure on Israel on the issue of settlement construction. (*DPA*)

19

Israeli soldiers exchanged fire with Palestinian militants who had fired a rocket-propelled grenade at them near the Nahal Oz crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. There were no reports of injuries. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Fatah delegate to the unity talks and PA intelligence chief Majed Faraj announced that negotiations between Fatah and Hamas had been postponed until 25 August, the latest deadline set by Egypt. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey defended Switzerland's decision to meet with a Hamas delegation. "Hamas is an important player in the Middle East conflict that cannot be ignored," said Ms. Calmy-Rey in an interview. (*AFP*)

Israel had rejected the US demand to suspend a planned settlement project in East Jerusalem. Israeli officials said the country's Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, had been summoned to the State Department over the weekend and told that a project made up of 20 apartments developed by an American millionaire should not go ahead. Mr. Netanyahu told his Cabinet there would be no limits on Jewish construction anywhere in "unified Jerusalem." "We cannot accept the fact that Jews wouldn't be entitled to live and buy anywhere in Jerusalem," Mr. Netanyahu declared, calling Israeli sovereignty over the entire city "indisputable." The project is being funded by Irving Moskowitz, a millionaire from Florida and supporter of Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem, who has funded similar construction projects in the past. Mr. Moskowitz purchased the Shepherd Hotel in 1985 and plans to tear it down and build apartments in its place. The approval, granted by the Jerusalem municipality earlier this month, allows for the construction of 20 apartments plus a three-level underground parking lot. (*AP*)

20

A 15-year-old Palestinian boy died after he was shot in the chest the previous night by Israeli soldiers as he approached the Gaza border fence. The boy was wearing a heavy coat on a hot day, raising suspicions, but he was not carrying weapons or explosives, the Israeli army said. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli army seized seven Palestinians in Bethlehem, Jericho and nearby villages. (*IMEMC*)

Two Palestinian men, aged 17 and 33, died of asphyxiation and eight others were injured in an explosion in a smuggling tunnel between Gaza and Egypt. Fuel being smuggled through the tunnel was leaking before the collapse, medical sources said. (*AFP, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley declared at a Washington press briefing: "We have made our views known to Israel [and] our views are not new either, that this kind of construction [in East Jerusalem] is the type ... of issue that should be subject to permanent status negotiations, and that we are concerned that unilateral actions taken by the Israelis or the Palestinians cannot prejudice the outcome of these negotiations." He added that US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell would return to the region at the end of this week, to talk to Palestinian and Israeli officials and give a speech in Bahrain after Crown Prince Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa had authored a column in *The Washington Post* calling on the Arab countries to promote the Arab Peace Initiative by reaching out to the Israeli public. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Jordanian Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications Nabil Sharif rejected Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's claim that Jerusalem would remain the undivided capital of Israel and that Israel had a free hand to set up settlements throughout the West Bank. Mr. Sharif declared Mr. Netanyahu's remarks as nothing more than "fallacies that negate the well-established legal and political realities" and place obstacles "in the path of peace and US efforts that seek to establish peace through the realization of the two-State vision". (*DPA*)

Russian Federation's Middle East Envoy Alexander Saltanov called for a complete cessation of settlements in Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories to foster dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis realizing a two-State vision, during a meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser

Judeh. "Judeh underscored the importance of Russia's role and leverage on the international arena in pushing efforts forward towards the establishment of just and comprehensive peace in the region," a statement said. Mr. Saltanov and Mr. Judeh also discussed the idea of convening an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow. The Russian emissary is scheduled to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories in the coming days. (DPA)

Israel delivered nine stop-work orders to Palestinian residents building homes and agricultural infrastructure south of Hebron. The IDF detained the owner of one of the homes, according to the Christian Peacemaker Teams. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli settlers set fire to between 1,500 and 2,000 Palestinian-owned olive trees in the West Bank while others stoned cars, a Palestinian security official said. Two Palestinian motorists were slightly wounded and five vehicles damaged near the settlement of "Yitzhar" near Nablus. Israeli media said that the rampage had been described by settlers as a response to the IDF's destruction hours earlier of a caravan at a settlement outpost built without Israeli Government approval. (Reuters)

21

In Khan Yunis, some 60 Palestinians were injured in an explosion at a wedding party for a relative of Fatah leader Muhammad Dahlan. Ten people suffered serious injuries. Hamas official Ehab Al-Ghussein said that security services had arrested three suspects linked to the explosion. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine released a statement condemning the explosion and calling on Hamas to bring to an end such attacks, which were harmful to the Palestinian people and their struggle. (Ma'an News Agency)

Four IDF tanks with two bulldozers entered Khan Yunis in southern Gaza amid intensive gunfire, bulldozing large areas of agriculture lands. (Palestine Press Agency)

PA President Abbas told a Ramallah press conference: "We offer immediate presidential and parliamentary elections to end the issue of internal split. Who wins the elections leads the country". In response, Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman rejected Mr. Abbas' call saying that: "First, there must be an agreement on the five files which are the PLO, the Government, the security, the reconciliation and the elections." Hamas is not afraid of elections but "it should be preceded by lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip and releasing MPs detained by the Israeli occupation authority," declared another Hamas spokesman, Sami Abu Zuhri. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor told foreign reporters that US calls for a freeze on West Bank settlement construction run counter to past agreements between the two nations and could undermine US credibility. He underlined that it was important for past understandings to be honoured and said: "We never had an agreement with the previous Administration. We had an agreement with America." (AP)

In a [statement](#), the Presidency of the European Union [Sweden] urged Israel to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem, including home demolitions and evictions, and declared that such actions are illegal under international law. The Presidency recalled the EU declaration of 24 March 2009 stating that these activities not only affect Palestinians living in East Jerusalem but further threaten the chances of peace. (www.se2009.eu)

A World Bank report stated that the Bank would provide \$40 million in budget support for the PA Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. The grant was authorized after the World Bank assessed adequate progress on a number of public financial management reforms. "It is important to remember that for the PA to meet its fiscal goals, reforms must be accompanied by substantial private sector growth. This can only be accomplished by further relaxation of the Israeli closure regime, enabling Palestinian enterprises to reliably access markets. In the immediate term, fiscal stability is dependent on the donor community," said World Bank Acting Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza, Dina Abu-Ghaida. (Wafa)

Israel decided to declare as State land around 138,600 dunums of West Bank land which had emerged on the western shoreline of the Dead Sea as a result of water shrinkage, the Peace Now group reported. "It would appear that the primary purpose of registering this area as 'State land' is to prevent Palestinian use of the land or any Palestinian assertion of ownership over it," Mr. Hagit Ofra of Peace Now said. (www.peacenow.org.il)

Haaretz reported that, according to Israel Lands Administration (ILA) rules, Palestinians in East Jerusalem were barred from owning the vast majority of West Jerusalem homes. Even Palestinians with an Israeli ID were considered foreigners, who must show the ILA proof of eligibility to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return. (Haaretz, Wafa)

Since it annexed East Jerusalem, Israel has expropriated 24,500 dunums (6,054 acres) privately owned by Palestinians. By the end of 2007, some 50,197 housing units had been built for Israelis on the expropriated land, but none for Palestinians, according to the Association of Civil Rights in Israel, which released a report entitled "Life in the garbage: a report on sanitation services in East Jerusalem", stressing that Palestinian residents were compelled to provide solutions at their own expense to cope with the sanitation and environmental problems owing to Israeli neglect. (www.acri.org.il)

Haaretz reported that the IDF was drafting a plan to evacuate 23 unauthorized outposts in one day but the IDF spokesman's office said in a statement that it had not received any order from the Israeli Government for a "lightning" evacuation of outposts and denied having begun preparatory operations for such a move. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, Wafa)

Israeli settlers continued to riot over outpost demolitions, hurling stones at IDF soldiers and Palestinian cars in the West Bank. They threw stones at the car of PLC member Walid Assaf as he drove north to Qalqilya. The IDF troops at the military checkpoint said that they were unable to take measures against the unknown settlers. (Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post)

The Israeli State Prosecutor announced that the Israeli Government was considering confiscating privately owned Palestinian land near the "Ofra" settlement, in the West Bank, to turn the site into a regional sewage treatment plant that would serve both "Ofra" and the nearby Palestinian communities. (Haaretz)

22

Israeli forces raided the city of Nablus, seizing four Palestinians from their homes. Palestinian security sources said Israeli soldiers detained 36-year-old Raafat Al-Madani, 26-year-old Hasan Fuqaha, 21-year-old Mahmoud Hinnawi, and 22-year-old Mahmoud Al-Abid. The Israeli military said that it had detained five Palestinians in overnight raids. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian medical sources reported that a Palestinian had been wounded in the arm by Israeli military fire as several armoured vehicles and bulldozers entered an area east of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. (MEMC)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal told Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov a few days ago in Damascus that if PA President Abbas came to an agreement on a final settlement of the conflict with Israel, and if the agreement was approved in a Palestinian referendum, Hamas would not try to derail such an accord. At a 19 July Cabinet meeting, Shin Bet security service chief Yuval Diskin said that the more conciliatory tone, which had been reflected recently in statements by senior Hamas officials, did not reflect a real shift in the Organization's ideological principles. (Haaretz)

Before leaving for a one-day visit to Syria, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he had been asked to help mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mr. Erdogan reiterated Turkey's readiness to help restart indirect talks between Syria and Israel and in other tracks of the Arab-Israeli peace process. (AP)

Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in an interview with *Al-Hayat* that Israel and Hamas had already agreed on most issues ahead of a swap deal, such as the number of prisoners to be released by Israel. The only obstacle left was Israel's insistence on deporting West Bank prisoners to Gaza, which he described as "unacceptable from a moral and human point of view." (Ynetnews)

Israel's Education Ministry said that it would remove from school textbooks the Arabic term *Nakba*, or catastrophe, describing the events of 1948. The term, which was not part of the curriculum in schools in Jewish communities, was introduced into a book for use in Arab schools in 2007. (Haaretz)

Israeli police allowed 45 far-right Israeli settlers to tour the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. The director of the Islamic Waqf office in Jerusalem, Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, said that Israeli police had escorted the settlers to protect them. No physical confrontations were reported. The previous day, right-wing Israeli groups rallied inside the Old City of Jerusalem near Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Police closed Al-Wad road to protect them and facilitate the demonstration. Palestinian shop owners had been forced to shut down their shops at 6 p.m. (Ma'an News Agency)

More than 25 Israeli military vehicles entered the northern West Bank village of Awarta, south of Nablus, providing security to a group of settlers travelling to visit two archaeological sites from periods of ancient Jewish history. (Ma'an News Agency)

Responding to reports that senior PA negotiator Saeb Erakat had approached the United States on the issue of the wall, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu told Knesset members, "The separation fence will remain in place and will not be dismantled". Mr. Netanyahu said that the fence should be credited with restoring security and preventing the entry of Palestinian suicide bombers into Israeli towns. As a result, the fence should remain in place. "I hear they are saying today that because it's quiet, it's possible to take down the fence. My friends, the opposite is true... It's quiet because a fence exists." He said that Israel welcomed "a certain improvement in the functioning of Palestinian security forces" in the West Bank.

But he added: "The fence is important." (Haaretz)

PLC Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik announced that he would resume his duties as speaker on 26 July. Mr. Dweik had sent invitations to Palestinian, Arab, and European political figures as well as PLC members of all political parties to participate in the ceremony of reopening the PLC chambers in Ramallah, which had been mainly closed for three years. "We want to reactivate the PLC because we intend to unite the Palestinian people and heal the rift between rivals," Mr. Dweik said. The announcement came a day after former PLC Secretary-General Ibrahim Khreisha said that the term of the PLC speaker was one year and Mr. Dweik's term had expired while he was imprisoned in Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that child labour was on the rise in Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Although the 2004 Palestinian Child's Rights Law barred children below the age of 15 from working, hunger and need drove families to allow their children to abandon schooling, UNICEF said. (www.unicef.org)

The UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine began its two-day deliberations in Geneva, discussing the responsibility of the international community to uphold international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians in Occupied Palestinian Territories in the wake of the war in Gaza. At the opening session, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, in a message read out by Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, said that the Government of Israel had to commit itself fully to its obligations.

Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that Israel's Operation Cast Lead had demonstrated the total disregard by Israel of international humanitarian law. He referred to the recent testimony by some 30 Israeli soldiers whose commanders urged them to shoot first and worry later. He said that the international community could not show complacency in the face of such allegations. Rudy Salles, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and Vice-Chairman of the French National Assembly, said that one of the Assembly's initiatives was to organize, with the Government of Malta, a parliamentary symposium on the status of the city of Jerusalem and to come out with proposals that would be sent to the main stakeholders. In a message delivered by Paul Badji, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, observed that for the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians who lived there, the war in Gaza had not ended and that the blockade continued today. The Permanent Representative of Palestine to the United Nations in Geneva, Ibrahim Khraishi, also spoke of the urgency of ending the tragedy and injustice of the Palestinian people, after more than 60 years of statelessness. He said that while resolving the question of Palestine was urgent for the Middle East, it was also important for the whole world. (United Nations Office at Geneva press release M09009E)

23

Israeli forces seized 14 Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

A senior Palestinian official, Yasser al-Wadeya, said that Fatah and Hamas had agreed to hold the presidential and legislative elections on 25 January and not to postpone them under any circumstances, according to *Al-Hayat*. "Leaders of all Palestinian factions will be in Cairo on 25 August for a last round of dialogue, which will end with the signing on a reconciliation agreement," said Mr. al-Wadeya, who was heading a delegation visiting Egypt and several Arab countries this week. (DPA)

The Arab Initiative could form the basis for a regional peace if modified, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said at a reception in Tel Aviv marking Egypt's National Day. "If these offers are not final offers, then I believe that this spirit can help create an atmosphere in which a comprehensive peace is possible" (DPA)

The Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release on the meetings of Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov, in Israel from 20 to 22 July. During the meetings, Mr. Saltanov said that a restored negotiation process would positively influence the situation in the region as a whole. The avoidance of unilateral steps, settlement activities in particular, and the reduction of confrontational rhetoric were now acquiring special significance. Gestures of goodwill and the creation of a favourable atmosphere for constructive diplomacy were of paramount need. The readiness of Russia at the Security Council and the Quartet to continue to cooperate with Israel and all concerned parties in the interests of achieving progress in the Middle East peace process was also reaffirmed during the meetings. (www.mid.ru)

Ir Amim, a group specializing in Jerusalem issues, stated in a report that Israel had handed control over much of the Silvan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem to settler groups in a creeping takeover kept away from public scrutiny. Government bodies transferred both private Palestinian property and national parks in Silvan outside the walls of the Old City to the settler organization Elad, according to Ir Amim. "It was done in the dark, in flagrant violation of the rules of good government and in some cases in violation of the law, without open and official decisions by the Government or Knesset and without public discussion, inquiry or scrutiny," the group stated in the report entitled "Shady dealings in Silvan". (AFP)

Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs issued the following statement:

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is deeply concerned about the destruction of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem near the old town and by the planned evictions. It calls on the Israeli government to end these operations immediately and to put a stop to all forms of settlement of the occupied Palestinian territory. It has passed on this request directly to the Israeli authorities.

The FDFA is monitoring with concern the events in East Jerusalem. It deplores the destruction of homes by the Israeli government and the eviction orders imposed on Palestinian families. It calls on the Israeli government not to proceed with the building of new apartments on Palestinian property in the Sheikh Jarrah district. East Jerusalem is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel is required by international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of the population.

Switzerland considers that the Israeli settlements and the destruction of houses in the occupied Palestinian territory are a violation of international humanitarian law, which forbids an occupying power to destroy goods in occupied territory or to transfer the civilian population. There is no military necessity that could justify the destruction of these houses or the evictions of Palestinian families.

The continuation of colonisation is incompatible with a genuine peace process which seeks a global and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (AFP, www.eda.admin.ch)

France summoned the Israeli Ambassador in Paris, Daniel Shek, to demand an immediate halt to settlement building in East Jerusalem. The French Foreign Ministry's head of political affairs, Gérard Araud, made the demands during a meeting with Mr. Shek, said Ministry Spokesman Eric Chevallier. The Foreign Ministry also urged Israel to reopen border crossings into the Gaza Strip. "Israel must reopen border crossings on a regular basis to allow Gaza to rebuild itself and life to return to normal," Mr. Chevallier said. Mr. Araud also voiced France's concern about restrictions on the movements of French diplomats in the Occupied Palestinian Territory over the last few months. France stressed the "need for Israeli security forces to respect international law concerning diplomatic and consular agents," according to Mr. Chevallier. (AFP)

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held its [third plenary](#), discussing the role of parliaments and civil society in advocating adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as the responsibility of the media. The panellists were: Phyllis Starkey, Labour Member of the British Parliament; Yizhar Be'er, Executive Director of the Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel; Phyllis Bennis, Co-Chair of the International Coordinating Network for Palestine and Director of the New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies; Nasser Al Laham, editor at the *Ma'an News Agency*; and Gideon Levy, Columnist for *Haaretz*. (www.unog.ch)

24

At the Askar refugee camp in Nablus, the IDF arrested Mahmoud Rashad Abu Kishak, an Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade member "wanted" for a string of attacks, the army said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli Defence Ministry had distributed a document this week saying that unions affiliated with Hamas had set up joint committees with UN agencies that dispensed humanitarian aid. The document was also sent to the United States to warn them that the \$900 million it had pledged to help rebuild the Gaza Strip could fall into Hamas hands. A senior Defence Officer said on 23 July, "All humanitarian aid sent into the Gaza Strip today needs to receive Hamas clearance," adding, "Hamas uses violence against international organizations, including UNRWA, if they do not cooperate." According to officials, UNRWA and UNDP had "no choice" but to have some contact with Hamas officials in order for the assistance to be transferred. They added that Israel could live with that situation as long as the talks remained only at the technical level and did not become political in nature. One official said that efforts to develop a mechanism through which money for the rehabilitation of Gaza could be channelled into the region, without in any way strengthening or helping Hamas, are continuing. In response to the report, UNRWA Spokesman Chris Gunness released a statement saying: "UNRWA distributes its aid on basis of need. Humanitarian need dictates the way we distribute aid and nothing else." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Hamas leader Ismail Radwan denied a report in *The Jerusalem Post* report that the movement could have diverted or stolen international funds donated to the reconstruction effort in war-torn Gaza. He said that the report consisted of "lies", adding that the entry of foreign aid to Gaza was overseen by Israel and not by Hamas. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The US Administration issued a message asking Israel not to build in the E-1 area between Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim", stating that any change in the status quo in E-1 would be "extremely damaging, even "corrosive". Israel's plan was to strengthen its hold on East Jerusalem, which would then be completely surrounded by Jewish settlements. The Obama Administration demanded a moratorium on settlement building in East Jerusalem until an agreement was reached on the city's legal status. In this context, three senior American officials will visit Israel in the following week: Special Envoy George Mitchell, National Security Adviser James Jones and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. (*Haaretz*)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was expected to announce the transfer of \$200 million to the Palestinian Authority in an effort to improve conditions on the ground that would bolster attempts to revive stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The money was part of \$900 million in aid that Ms. Clinton had pledged at a donors' conference in Egypt in March. (*Reuters*)

At the [closing session](#) of the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine in Geneva, Saviour Borg, the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, read out the [Concluding Statement of the Organizers](#) expressing serious concern at the continued settlement activities in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. The Permanent Representative of Palestine to the United Nations in New York, Riyad Mansour, said that for the first time in the history of Israel there were investigations and many people were saying that Israel had to be held accountable for its human rights and humanitarian law violations. Wrapping up the two-day discussions, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Paul Badji, made concluding remarks, saying that one of the most important challenges was the complete denial by Israel that any wrongdoing had been committed violating the laws of war and it has been so far total intransigence as regards cooperation with investigations of what had happened during the military operation. There was an historic opportunity to put an end to impunity and hold perpetrators of grave violations of international humanitarian law and international crimes accountable for their actions. (www.unog.ch)

UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness denied a report in *The Jerusalem Post* that its Director John Ging had fled the Gaza Strip after Hamas death threats. UNRWA also denied a report in the newspaper that Hamas could have diverted or stolen international funds donated to the reconstruction of Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Unofficial Israeli and Palestinian representatives that were part of the 2003 Geneva Initiative, have over the past 18 months negotiated a draft document, outlining in minute detail the security arrangements between Israel and a future Palestinian State. Israel's *Daily Yediot Ahronot* reported that under the document, the Palestinian State would be demilitarized and would, among others, not be allowed to have fighter jets, helicopter gunships, tanks, rockets, anti-aircraft or anti-ship weapons, artillery, mortar shells, mines and machine guns larger than 7.62 calibre. Instead, Palestinians would be allowed to have 400 light armoured vehicles as well as light weapons and non-lethal equipment to disperse demonstrations. This security document was to be officially presented to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and National Security Adviser James Jones this week.

(DPA)

25

An Israeli civilian car came under gunfire near the Huwwara military checkpoint, in Nablus, in the West Bank. None of the occupants was hurt.

(Ma'an News Agency)

26

The IDF detained three Palestinians from Al-Jalazoun refugee camp in Ramallah, and another was arrested near Nablus, in the West Bank. Israeli sources said the detainees, who were not identified, were taken to interrogation centres. (Wafa)

US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus, briefing him on the American efforts to revive the peace process and reaffirming President Obama's commitment to achieve comprehensive peace in the region. Later, Mr. Mitchell flew to Tel Aviv where he met with Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak in an effort to reach an agreement on freeze of settlements construction. The two were reportedly close to a deal in which Israel would be allowed to complete a limited number of projects in advanced stages of construction, but it would freeze all other building for an as-yet undetermined period of time. After the meeting, Mr. Barak said Israel would do everything in its power to advance a regional peace agreement, but without sacrificing its "vital interests." Israel had said that 700 buildings containing 2,480 apartments — mostly in ultra-Orthodox settlements such as "Kiryat Sefer" and "Betar Illit" had been too far along in the construction process to be halted. There were also some non-residential construction projects whose completion Israel deemed vital, such as the closure of gaps in the separation wall and paving of certain roads. A future agreement was also expected to include a renewed Israeli pledge to evacuate 23 illegal outposts built after March 2001, which the Government would like to link to the Arab Peace Initiative. Later in the day, Mr. Mitchell made an unscheduled trip to Egypt where he met with President Hosni Mubarak. (Haaretz, SANA)

The BBC reported that a recent UK Foreign Affairs Committee report stated that it was regrettable UK-supplied military items were "almost certainly" used by Israel in the Gaza conflict. The cross-party group, which monitors foreign policy, called on the EU to make relations with Israel conditional on its peacemaking efforts. It also criticized Hamas for its use of rockets against Israeli civilian targets. The Committee Chairman, Michael Gapes, said that the Committee saw "few signs that the current policy of non-engagement with Hamas" was effective. He said that the Government "should urgently consider engaging with moderate elements within Hamas" as it had with the political wing of Hezbollah in Lebanon earlier this year. The report condemned Israel for the continuing growth of settlements and for its blockades around the Gaza Strip. It also called for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to declare whether it considered war crimes had been committed during the December 2008 to January 2009 conflict in Gaza and southern Israel. (BBC)

Israeli settlers seized a Palestinian house in East Jerusalem. The Israeli Police and the IDF supported them during the attack and prevented Palestinians from approaching the house. The IDF arrested Hatem Abdel Qader, former PA minister for Jerusalem Affairs and 11 internationals, injuring Dimirti Daliani, the spokesperson of Fatah in Jerusalem as well as other Palestinians. (Wafa)

The Israeli Central Court of Jerusalem issued a decision in favour of the Greek Orthodox Church, preventing an Israeli company from making use of church properties in East Jerusalem to build settlements, reversing a deal made by former Patriarch Irenios I. (Ma'an News Agency)

A musical band from Bahrain, which was supposed to perform for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, missed the second of three planned concerts after being denied entry at the Rafah border crossing. The band had planned to go to the border and perform a song, in protest against Israeli settlements. (Gulf Daily News)

27

IDF forces arrested four Palestinians in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

The IDF ransacked the homes of Anas Addeik and Ibrahim Najim in the village of Huwwara after the IDF had ordered them into the street.

(Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered an area east of the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip amid intensive gunfire. Agricultural land was bulldozed, but no injuries were reported. (Palestine Press News Agency)

At least seven Palestinians were killed overnight when fuel exploded in a smuggling tunnel beneath the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials in Gaza said. (Reuters)

The IDF established a mobile military checkpoint north of Ramallah, and stopped hundreds of Palestinian vehicles. Hours later, the soldiers withdrew. No detentions were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates arrived in Israel and met with Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu. During his visit, Mr. Gates was expected to discuss the settlements and the evacuation of outposts. (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post)

US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell told PA President Abbas that he was still working on a deal with Israel to halt settlement activity so that peace talks could resume. "We are discussing the issue but we didn't conclude an agreement yet with the Israelis," a senior Palestinian official quoted Mr. Mitchell as saying over a working dinner with Mr. Abbas in Ramallah. Senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat issued a statement after the talks, saying "the only way to return credibility to the peace process" was for all to honour their commitments. He said the Quartet must "play a constructive role in holding the parties accountable for honouring their commitments... The success of the peace process will depend on the effective ability of the Quartet to oversee and report on ... both sides in carrying out their obligations". (Reuters)

According to an IDF Civil Administration report covering the first half of 2009, there were more than 300,000 residents living in settlements in the West Bank. As of 30 June, the settlements had 304,569 residents, an increase of 2.3 per cent since January. Most of the growth was in the religious communities, including the ultra-Orthodox settlements. The settlement of "Mod'in Illit" gained 1,879 residents, a 4.5 percent increase, while "Beitar Illit" gained 1,074 residents, a 3.1 per cent jump. (Haaretz)

Members of the Israeli rightist movements Land of Israel Faithful and Youth for the Land of Israel announced a large-scale operation to set up 11 new settlement outposts in the West Bank in the coming week. They said that this plan was meant to commemorate "that night in 1946 when the Jewish community established 11 new positions in the Negev ahead of the land's partition," in response to the British Government's White Paper.

A large group is planning to rebuild the "Nofei Yarden" outpost. Attorney Michael Sfard declared that the Yesh Din organization was planning to call on the Israeli police and the army to thwart the plan. (Haaretz, Wafa)

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President of the Union of Reform Judaism, the largest Jewish denomination in the US, said the vast majority of American Jews back a settlement freeze. In a telephone interview with Haaretz, Mr. Yoffie said that at last week's White House meeting between US President Barack Obama and 16 Jewish leaders, "there wasn't a single person around that table — not one — who on substance supported settlement activity."

(Wafa)

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, saying that the Secretary-General had joined the Quartet in underscoring that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict was one that would end the occupation and fulfil the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands for two peoples — Israel and an independent, contiguous and viable Palestine — living side by side in peace and security. (UN press release SC/9717)

The 17th International Media [Seminar](#) on Peace in the Middle East opened its two-day meeting in Rio de Janeiro under the title “Promoting Israeli-Palestinian dialogue – a view from South America”. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, urged Israelis, Palestinians and the wider international community, particularly journalists, to support the Organization’s ongoing efforts to help the parties arrive at a just and lasting solution. (UN press release PAL/2118- PI/1900)

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A 23-year-old Palestinian was killed and five others were missing after the second deadly collapse this week of a smuggling tunnel between Gaza and Egypt, medics said. (AFP)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell said that they had made progress on their dispute over West Bank settlements but offered no sign of a breakthrough at a meeting in Jerusalem. “I think we’re making progress toward achieving an understanding that would enable us to continue, and in fact complete, a peace process that would be established between us and our Palestinian neighbours and ultimately the entire region,” Mr. Netanyahu said. Meanwhile, a senior aide to US Envoy George Mitchell told Mr. Abbas that final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians would be limited to a time frame of a year and a half, *Al-Hayyat* reported. (AP, *Haaretz*)

Israeli forces ordered the demolition of electricity pylons under construction in the village of At-Tuwani, in the South Hebron Hills. The electricity project is supported by Quartet Representative Tony Blair. The head of the village council, Saber Hreini, said that he had written to Mr. Blair on 26 May, requesting his assistance in securing a written permission for the electricity work to continue, but there had been no response from Mr. Blair. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator, representing UN aid agencies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), represented by 25 NGOs, demanded “full and unfettered access” into and out of Gaza in particular to restore Gaza’s educational system. “During the 23 days of Israel’s operation ‘Cast Lead’ in Gaza, 18 schools were completely destroyed and at least 280 were damaged. Today, one month before the start of the new school year, more than six months after the ceasefires, none of these schools have been properly rebuilt or rehabilitated due to lack of construction materials,” they said in a [statement](#). “Ensuring access to education is an obligation of all governments, its primacy proclaimed by agreements ranging from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” they added. (AFP, [www.ochaopt.org](#))

Israeli activists distributed fliers to soldiers at the IDF induction centre in Tel Hashomer urging them to cover up abuse of Palestinians. The flyer urged the soldiers not to confide in their commanders and to refrain from cooperating with investigators if they physically abused Palestinians. The notice was intended for enlistees into the Kfir infantry brigade, most of whose operations take place in the OPT. (*Haaretz*)

The Elders, a group of eminent global leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela, announced plans to visit Israel, the West Bank and Gaza at the end of August. The group said in a statement: “The Elders’ delegation will be led by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and will also include Ela Bhatt, Gro Brundtland, Jimmy Carter, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu. They will be joined by business leaders Richard Branson and Jeff Skoll who, with others, have helped to establish The Elders’ organisation and continue to support their work. The Elders are supportive of current peace efforts but have no intention of intervening in that process. Rather, the objective of their visit is to meet a wide cross-section of Israeli and Palestinian society.” (AP, *Haaretz*, [www.theelders.org](#))

Israeli police dismantled the West Bank outpost of “Mitzpe Avihai” near Hebron. The outpost had consisted for several months of just one tin shack, inhabited by several single males, but it was expanded on that day to include another tin shack on an adjacent hilltop to accommodate two families. The settlers were expected to rebuild the outpost. The evacuation came after the Youth for Israel Movement established 11 new outposts on 26 July. (*Haaretz*)

The Economic and Social Council considered a [report](#) on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and on the Syrian population in the Occupied Golan Heights. The report, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, underlined that the primary cause of poverty and humanitarian crisis is the Israeli mobility restrictions and closure system which restrict Palestinian access to natural resources, namely water, land, and also basic social services, including health and education, employment, markets and social and religious networks. ([www.unog.org](#))

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A number of Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered Al-Qararra town, in the southern Gaza Strip, opening fire at homes and destroying farm land. No injuries were reported. (MEMC)

Two Palestinians were killed when a smuggling tunnel linking the Gaza Strip to Egypt collapsed, medical sources said. At least nine people had been killed this week in cave-ins and other mishaps in the vast network of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Over the past three years, 127 people had died in the tunnels, according to Iyad Abu Hujair of the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution. (AFP, *Ma’an News Agency*)

An Israeli court convicted Fuad Shubaki, former PA President Yasser Arafat’s financial adviser, of illegal arms dealing. According to the court, Mr. Shubaki had financed and coordinated the purchase of 50 tons of weapons loaded on the Karine A ship that was sailing from Iran to Gaza and was intercepted in 2002. During his trial, Mr. Shubaki said that he had been carrying out Mr. Arafat’s orders. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *Ynetnews*)

The IDF raided the village of Kafr Aqab, in the West Bank, and ransacked the home of a security escort of a former PA minister. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Israeli military sources said that a rocket fired from northern Gaza had landed in the Negev. No damage or injuries were reported, according to *Israel Radio*. (*Palestine Press News Agency*)

The official spokesman of the PA Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that US efforts to restart the Middle East peace process may begin to bear fruit. According to Mr. Abu Rudeineh, the coming weeks would be very decisive, and autumn would be very “hot” because it would become clear whether the US would succeed in pushing forward the peace process and crystallize a framework for that process, (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu met with US National Security Adviser James Jones in Jerusalem to discuss, among others, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Mr. Netanyahu told Mr. Jones that Israel would not fully open the Gaza border crossings until Gilad Shalit was released. (*Haaretz*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit discussed Middle East issues with Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during a visit to

Brasilia. Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, who also took part in the discussions, reiterated the view that peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through the creation of an "economically viable" Palestinian State that was not broken up by Israeli control lines. He also lent Brazil's voice to the international community's consensus that Israel should immediately cease expanding settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (AFP)

Israel's *Channel 10* television reported that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had frozen a project for the construction of some 900 apartments in the "Pisgat Ze'ev" settlement in East Jerusalem. (Haaretz)

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The Israeli army seized eight Palestinians overnight in different locations in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)
Israeli soldiers seized three Palestinians in the village of Beit Awwa, west of Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli Government released a report entitled "The Operation in Gaza 27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009: Factual and Legal Aspects." "Israel had both a right and an obligation to take military action against Hamas in Gaza to stop Hamas' almost incessant rocket and mortar attacks upon thousands of Israeli civilians and its other acts of terrorism," the executive summary of the report stated. It also stated, "IDF investigative teams are currently examining approximately 100 complaints, including 13 criminal investigations opened so far, and will examine more complaints if and when filed." "Israel has both the responsibility and the right under international law, as does every State, to defend its civilians from intentional rocket attacks. It believes that it discharged that responsibility in a manner consistent with the rules of international law," it added. (AP, www.mfa.gov.il)

Palestinian sources told *Al-Jazeera* that Turkey had officially asked to be involved in the ongoing reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah. *Al-Jazeera* quoted the sources as saying that the request had been relayed to Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, and that Turkey had also asked PA President Abbas to urge Egypt to permit Turkey to intervene in the talks. (Ynetnews)

The World Health Organization (WHO) said that Gazans had limited access to proper medical supplies because of an Israeli blockade, and equipment now in use was often broken or outdated. "The main issue here about the blockade is that it undermines the supply system as a whole," Mahmoud Daher, the head of WHO office in Gaza, told a news conference in Jerusalem. Equipment such as X-ray machines and batteries were particularly difficult to get through the blockade, WHO said, adding that maintenance staff and equipment suppliers were not able to move freely between Gaza and the West Bank to receive training on maintaining the equipment. Also, devices that required repairs were often scrapped or kept in use despite their deficiencies because of the difficulty in shipping them out of Gaza to be fixed, WHO said. (AP)

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The Popular Resistance Committee said that its fighters had clashed with Israeli forces that entered eastern Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. No injuries were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh threatened to boycott reconciliation talks with Fatah scheduled for 25 August in Cairo unless his supporters detained in the West Bank were released. (Reuters)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* that his political party and military wing would commit to an immediate reciprocal ceasefire with Israel, as well as a prisoner swap that would return Hamas fighters for Gilad Shalit. He also said his organization would accept and respect a Palestinian State based on 1967 borders as part of a broader peace agreement with Israel, provided Israeli negotiators accepted the right of return for millions of Palestinian refugees and the establishment of a capital for the Palestinian State in East Jerusalem. (The Wall Street Journal)

Israeli authorities told Palestinian crossing official Raed Fattouh that all crossings between Israel and Gaza would be closed for two days and they would be reopened on 2 August. Mr. Fattouh said that no reason had been given to him. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Jerusalem Post reported that the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had registered 1,500 Palestinian claims for damage. (The Jerusalem Post)
