

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

Monthly media monitoring review

December 2011

Monthly highlights

- Palestinians submit to the Quartet document relating to security arrangements and prospective borders ([1 December](#))
- PLO Executive Committee announces it will go to the Security Council and the General Assembly to force Israel to commit to the two-State solution and stop settlement construction ([7 December](#))
- Israel warns of tougher military action on Gaza ([11 December](#))
- Israel closes controversial access ramp to Al-Aqsa Mosque compound ([11 December](#))
- Secretary-General calls on Israel to freeze all settlement activity ([12 December](#))
- Palestinian flag is raised at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris ([13 December](#))
- Iceland formally recognizes Palestinian State ([15 December](#))
- European embassies in Israel tell Government to consider treatment of its Arab population a “core issue, not second tier to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” ([16 December](#))
- Israel releases 550 Palestinian prisoners in the second half of a swap deal ([18 December](#))
- MERCOSUR signs free trade agreement with Palestine ([20 December](#))
- Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco briefs the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question ([20 December](#))
- Fatah and Hamas reach key agreement on admission of Hamas to the PLO ([22 December](#))
- Draft law declaring Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel is submitted to the Knesset ([25 December](#))

I

Israeli soldiers arrested seven Palestinians in Jenin. (*Bahrain News Agency*)

The Palestinians submitted to the Quartet a document relating to security arrangements and the prospective borders of the Palestinian State. According to a Palestinian official, the document was submitted to the representatives of the Quartet during a 14 November meeting with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee member and Palestinian Authority (PA) Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat. Mr. Erakat said that the PA's vision supported the two-State solution. The Palestinian State would be based on the 1967 borders, with a minor, agreed-on land exchange, and the presence of a third party on the borders with Israel in return for a full Israeli withdrawal. (*Ynetnews, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

Following the Palestinian submission on security arrangements and prospective borders, the Quartet demanded that Israel provide a counterproposal.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, refused and said that any counterproposal should be presented during direct negotiations. (*Haaretz*)

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, President Giorgio Napolitano had granted the head of the Palestinian [General] Delegation in Italy, Sabri Attiyah, the rank of Ambassador. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ahmad Yousef, a senior political leader of Hamas, said that the recent meeting between PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal had set the vision of a unified strategy for the struggle against the occupation, adding that the movement was adopting non-violent resistance as a strategy. (*IMEMC*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that he would not serve as the prime minister of a unity Government. “I don't intend to run for the presidency or anything else for that matter. ... I cannot accept being an obstacle, never was and never will be. ... I made a very explicit call on the factions ... to go ahead and agree on a new prime minister,” he said in an interview. (*Haaretz*)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad said in an interview that he wanted to reduce the Palestinian reliance on foreign aid drastically in the coming year and hoped to be able to pay for all routine operations of his Government by 2013. (*AP*)

Israeli forces closed the Allenby crossing between the West Bank and Jordan. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a statement, France condemned the decision by the Israeli authorities to retroactively legalize the construction of more than 100 housing units in the

settlement of "Shilo". (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

Settlers stormed the village of Iraq Burin, south-west of Nablus, and attacked Palestinian residents. (Wafa)

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) arrested nine Palestinians in Nablus and Hebron. (Ynetnews)

Palestinian detainees in Israel's Nafha prison said that they had been mistreated by prison authorities in an attempt to stir up tension before the second phase of a prisoner swap deal. Inmates said that they had been assaulted by guards without explanation and electricity in the jail had been out for three days. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had unveiled a pilot initiative to build 20 "environmental zero impact" schools in the Gaza Strip. The blueprint will be showcased by UNRWA at the forthcoming UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 11 December 2011. (www.unwra.org)

2

Responding to a question about the Palestinian application for UN membership during a press conference, the President of the Security Council for the month of December, Vitaly Churkin (Russian Federation), said that the expectation was that the matter would be acrimonious, but things had evolved in a very harmonious way, estimating that the Council was prepared to vote on the matter as soon as the Palestinian side indicated their preferred date, and as soon as a draft resolution, to be prepared by Lebanon, was submitted. Either had yet to happen, he noted. (www.un.org)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a new [report](#) that around 270,000 Palestinians currently resided in East Jerusalem, in addition to 200,000 Israeli settlers, while 3.7 million Palestinians from the remainder of the Occupied Palestinian Territory were prohibited from entering East Jerusalem without Israeli-issued permits. (www.ochaopt.org)

Haaretz reported that work had begun during the past two weeks on a road that would connect the "Pisgat Ze'ev," "Neve Yaakov" and "Anatot" settlements, as well as Shu'fat and Beit Hanina areas in East Jerusalem, to the main traffic artery in West Jerusalem, Menachem Begin Boulevard, as part of a policy to strengthen bonds with settlements. The route would also link Jerusalem's northern neighbourhoods with route 443, which in some places crossed through the West Bank. Peace Now said that the "road's current route is not legal, since the plan designates occupied territory for permanent infrastructures for the occupying Power, while completely disregarding the needs of the Palestinian residents in Beit Hanina and the area".

(*Haaretz*)

Israeli soldiers entered the Balata refugee camp, east of Nablus, and arrested three Palestinians. (IMEMC)

3

Three Israeli police officers were slightly wounded as riots near a checkpoint in north-east Jerusalem's Shu'fat neighbourhood resumed. Palestinian sources in Shu'fat said that two Palestinians were injured. On 1 December, dozens of Palestinians held a violent protest against the construction of a pedestrian walkway at the roadblock, threw stones and Molotov cocktails at police, who responded with rubber bullets. One Palestinian was arrested. (Ynetnews)

4

The PA reiterated its opposition to holding direct peace talks with Israel and pointed out that the Quartet had called for separate negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The PA's announcement came in response to remarks by US Department of State Spokesman Mark Toner, who had said on 2 December that Israel and the Palestinians must start direct talks before there can be any negotiations on borders and security. Chief PLO Negotiator Erakat expressed surprise and said that the Quartet, in September 2011, had called for separate talks with the two parties, during which Israel and the Palestinians would present their positions on security and borders. Mr. Erakat said that the Palestinians had since complied with the Quartet's demands and presented their positions on the two issues. He accused the Israeli Government of seeking to divert attention from its refusal to present the Quartet with its stance on security and borders. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel decided to release frozen public funds to the Palestinians after Germany had insisted on the release as a condition for the completion of the sale by Germany of a submarine to Israel, the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* reported. (DPA)

Representatives of Fatah and Hamas met in Gaza in a bid to push the implementation of a stalled reconciliation deal, an official said. The meeting was the first between members of the two sides in Gaza since the summit between PA President Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal the previous month. "The two movements agreed to cooperate and communicate with each other to develop methods to implement the agreement," the official said. Among the subjects discussed at the meeting, he said, were the formation of the temporary Government and the release of political prisoners held by both sides, which both parties had pledged would take place soon. (AFP)

Hamas members will not be allowed to represent Palestine in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the organization's Secretary-General, Anders Johnsson, told Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin. "Fatah is a recognized political movement, but Hamas is a terrorist organization. The PA must choose a side. Hamas is trying to use the IPU to pave its way to international recognition," Mr. Rivlin told Mr. Johnsson. "Your organization must make it clear that it will not allow Hamas members in its ranks, whether or not there is a unity deal [between Hamas and Fatah]," the Knesset Speaker said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) expressed concern over the extreme shortage of medicines in Gaza Strip hospitals. PCHR warned of the potential catastrophic repercussions on the health of the local population, especially patients and those suffering from chronic diseases.

According to Dr. Muneer al-Bursh, a health official in the Gaza Strip, health facilities and warehouses had completely run out of 120 essential medicines and 140 medical goods. (www.pchrgaza.org)

A group of Israeli settlers set fire to Palestinian agricultural land in the northern West Bank and destroyed five dunums of cultivated land that used to be controlled by the "Homesh" settlement but was returned to Palestinians in 2005. The attack came after Israeli police arrested seven female settlers for "price tag" attacks against Palestinians. According to AFP, the girls — six of them minors — were suspected of attacks on Palestinian olive trees. Two other women were held in custody for breaking into an Israeli army military base, spraying slogans and slashing tires. In an unrelated settler attack the previous day, Israeli settlers from "Itamar" beat a 60-year-old Palestinian man who they claimed had intruded on their land, PA settlement affairs official Ghassan Daghlis said. (*Palestine News Network*)

According to a report by the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, the Israeli military court of Ofer prison had admitted to the use of brutal interrogation methods against Palestinians detained at Israeli prisons. The report stated that the court had dropped charges against Ayman Hmeedeh, 23, who was arrested on charges of carrying out military operations against Israel, due to the illegality of interrogation techniques used by Israeli intelligence for two months during his interrogation at Ashkelon prison. (Wafa)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi informed PA President Abbas that Israel continued to prevent construction material from entering the Gaza Strip for rebuilding projects financed by a number of Arab and other friendly States. (www.unrwa.org)

5

Palestinian police and the Israeli army said that Israeli forces had arrested eight Palestinians. Three of the men were affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and, according to residents, were local leaders and activists in the faction. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Maj. Gen. (Retired) Yoav Galant, a former top IDF official, said that Israel's neglect of terrorist activity in the Gaza Strip would eventually necessitate significant military action in Gaza. He said that Israel's decisive action against terror infrastructures in the West Bank had caused terror levels to "drop to zero", while Gaza militants had been allowed to thrive. (*Haaretz*)

PA President Abbas vowed that the Palestinian initiative for full membership at the UN would continue. "Regarding the Security Council and the membership application of Palestine on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, we uphold the Palestinian approach", said Mr. Abbas, according to a statement from his office during a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feltman. "The purpose of this initiative is to bolster the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders and not to isolate or delegitimize Israel", he said. (*AFP*)

Palestinian reconciliation had failed to advance despite a recent meeting between Hamas Political Chief Mashaal and PA President Abbas, a Fatah official said. The official, who had participated in the meeting but spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the talks had been promising but needed bold decisions to implement the reconciliation agreement signed in May 2011. He said that party leaders must agree on a date to release all prisoners held for their political affiliation, reopen all institutes closed due to the feud, and issue passports to people in Gaza who had been unable to apply for them because of the division. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Saudi Arabia, at the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers, urged the international community to adopt a united and decisive stand to help the Palestinians get their legitimate rights, including an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of UN resolutions. (*arabnews.com*)

UNRWA and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, acting through the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), signed an agreement worth \$9,550,000 to construct five new schools in the Gaza Strip under its "zero environmental impact" school project. The schools will be designed by the Italian architecture firm, Mario Cucinella Architects, which would be showcased at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Durban. (www.unrwa.org)

The IDB, in its capacity as Coordinator for the Programme of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Reconstruction of Gaza, and UNRWA signed two agreements worth \$9.2 million supporting education and emergency shelter reconstruction in the Gaza Strip. The shelter project will repair 120 refugee houses in Gaza that had been damaged as a result of Israeli incursions. (www.unrwa.org)

Malaysia made a one-time voluntary contribution of \$100,000 to UNRWA. "The voluntary contribution is a gesture of Malaysia's continued support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for an independent State of Palestine," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. (www.bernama.com)

Israeli bulldozers demolished a Palestinian house in Silwan, in East Jerusalem, under the protection of Israeli soldiers and police. A member of the Committee for the Defence of Silwan, Fakhri Abu Diab, said in a statement that a family had lived in the demolished house for 40 years. (www.jordandirections.com, *Wafa*)

Israeli forces demolished two Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem – one in Beit Hanina and one in Silwan. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli National Security Council discussed the controversial plan known as the King's Garden located at the edge of the Silwan neighbourhood. The plan, promoted by Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, called for demolishing 22 Palestinian houses in Silwan to build a new tourist site and park. Another plan to build 1,600 housing units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement had been shelved. The National Housing Committee was supposed to discuss the plan on 18 December, but the session had been postponed and the plan was now expected to be processed under normal procedure via the Planning and Building Committee.

Israeli forces arrested a member of a local council near the West Bank city of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An UNRWA report reported that to date, 990 people – including 507 children – had lost their homes in demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, more than double the number in 2010, Spokesman Chris Gunness told *Ma'an News Agency*. "The loss of a home in normal times is highly destabilizing, but in the context of occupation and annexation it often becomes lastingly traumatic, especially for children", Mr. Gunness said, adding: "The United Nations calls on the Israeli authorities to abide by their obligations under international law, of which these displacements and demolitions are a clear violation".

6

Israeli military vehicles entered the northern Gaza Strip, crossing the border on the outskirts of Beit Hanoun. They opened heavy fire on Palestinian houses and agricultural land, causing material damage. (*KUNA*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Air Force aircraft fired intensively at Palestinian fishermen at sea in the al-Sudaniya area, in the northern Gaza Strip, damaging the fishing boats. (*KUNA*)

Israeli forces raided the village of Kufr Qaddoum, near the northern West Bank city of Qalqilya. They broke into several homes and arrested five Palestinians. (*Qatar News Agency*)

During a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State Feltman, PLO Executive Committee member Erakat said that resuming negotiations required that the Israeli Government freeze its settlement activities and accept the two-State solution within 1967 borders, noting that those were not Palestinian conditions but Israeli obligations since the first stage of the road map. He called on the US Administration to help release Palestinian prisoners who were arrested before the signing of the Oslo accords in September 1993, and said that Israel must be questioned for continuing its settlement activities and the blockade on the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, he said that the PLO was determined to gain Palestine's membership in the UN as an independent State within 1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as its capital. (*Wafa*)

PA President Abbas chaired a meeting of the Fatah Central Committee in Ramallah amidst reports that Prime Minister Fayyad was planning to run in the next presidential election. Sources close to Mr. Fayyad were quoted as saying that the Prime Minister would present his candidacy for PA President only if Mr. Abbas decided not to run for another term. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that global and regional politics were not yet ripe for a Palestinian State. "The conditions are not ripe for resumption of a political process capable of delivering an end to the Israeli occupation", he said. (*The Jordan Times*)

Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, condemned Israeli threats to freeze tax revenues again if Palestinians continued efforts to obtain membership in UN agencies. "This is a cheap extortion that Palestinians cannot surrender to", she said. "The continued withholding of the money is a theft and it aims to get political concessions", she said, adding that the Palestinian leadership would not stop bidding for UN

membership. (*Xinhua*)

Israel had begun turning Gaza's naval borders into imposed facts by marking the area that Palestinian fishermen would be allowed to work in. Israeli gunboats had been putting the maritime marks, giving the fishermen a work space of three nautical miles, the Hamas Ministry of Agriculture said in a statement. (*Xinhua*)

The Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee was to consider a plan for a new national park in the Mount Scopus area, which critics said was designed to block the development of two Palestinian neighbourhoods in the east of the city. The plan's explanatory notes indicated that Mount Scopus' eastern slopes were vital to the area's landscape and archaeology. But residents of the adjacent Issawiya and A-Tur neighbourhoods said that the plan aimed to prevent the two communities from expanding and to enable the building of a Jewish settlement. (*Haaretz*)

According to statement released by the Palestinian Legislative Council, an Israeli military court had ordered the deportation of a Hamas lawmaker from Jerusalem to Ramallah. Ahmad Attoun, a Jerusalemite, was arrested in front of the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Jerusalem in September 2011. He had previously been detained for three years. ICRC said that it had told Israeli authorities that international humanitarian law prohibited the forcible transfer of Palestinian residents from their homes. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an official [letter](#) dated 25 November to the President of the French-Palestine Solidarity Association, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé expressed his deep concern over the indictment and incarceration of Bassem Tamimi, a protest organizer from the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, and said in a statement: "Tamimi's situation is just as much of a concern to me as it is to you. The European Union has taken this case and considers Mr. Tamimi a human rights defender and a non-violent demonstrator". He added that "an official demarche has recently been delivered on his behalf to the Israeli authorities by the Chief Representative of the European Union Delegation in Tel Aviv. The aforementioned intervention also denoted the European support for the right to demonstrate non-violently in the Palestinian territories". Mr. Tamimi had been incarcerated by Israel for the past nine months. His trial was scheduled to continue on 7 December at the Ofer military court. (www.popularstruggle.org)

At a meeting in Brussels with the Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, Tokia Saïfi, PA Minister of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Issa Qaraqe gave a detailed briefing of the difficult situation Palestinian prisoners faced in Israeli jails. He said that their treatment violated international law and humanitarian values and called on the European Parliament to send a fact-finding committee to investigate the prisoners' conditions and suffering in Israeli jails. (*Wafa*)

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, began a fact-finding mission to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the first since the post was created in 1993. He would meet with the Palestinians from 6 to 11 December and will be in Israel from 12 to 17 December. "During my mission, I will meet with Government officials from both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as with human rights defenders, journalists and media professionals, individuals and UN agencies to gather first-hand information", he said. (*AFP*)

Israel's Attorney General, Yehuda Weinstein, in a letter, said that he could not defend legislation targeting non-governmental organizations in the High Court. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

7

A Palestinian woman failed to stab an Israeli border guard on duty near Hebron when she was stopped by other Israeli security forces and arrested before she could carry out her mission. No injuries were reported in the incident. (www.IsraelNationalNews.com)

An Israeli air strike killed a Palestinian militant and wounded two others along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Gaza Health official Adham Abu Salmia said that the violence erupted when Israeli troops moved into a buffer zone east of Gaza City. Palestinian militants then engaged the troops in a gunbattle before an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at the gunmen. (*Haaretz*)

Unknown attackers scrawled anti-Arab graffiti on the walls of a West Bank mosque in the village of Burqin, southwest of Nablus, and tried to set it on fire, Israeli and Palestinian sources said. An Israeli spokeswoman said, "Burning tires were rolled towards the entrance of the mosque, which was slightly damaged. One car parked outside the mosque was set on fire and an attempt was made to set a second vehicle on fire too, though it was only partially successful." (*AFP*)

Israeli forces fired tear gas near a mosque in Dura, near Hebron, after clashes erupted with stone-throwers earlier in the day. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a [press release](#), the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said that the IDF were conducting a wave of arrests against Palestinian political leaders, activists, and members of Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the West Bank. The IDF also stormed the offices of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council from the Change and Reform Bloc, affiliated with Hamas in Tulkarm, and confiscated some items in the offices. (www.pchrgaza.org)

The PLO Executive Committee announced that it will go to the Security Council and the General Assembly to force Israel to commit to the two-State solution and stop settlement construction. "We took the decision to begin preparing a Security Council resolution to stop these practices," Mr. Erakat said. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

The PLO Executive Committee would be meeting to discuss the Quartet's position on the borders and security files after the latter's meeting with the Israeli Cabinet. The meeting, to be headed by President Abbas, would also discuss reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. (*Kuwait News Agency*)

An UNRWA report [found](#) evidence that in spite of Gaza's expanded activity in the construction industry due to the tunnel economy, the situation of some 1 million refugees registered with the Agency remained a concern. According to the report, which compared the first half of 2011 and 2010, less than 20 per cent of new jobs created in the public sector and about 55 per cent of new jobs in the private sector had gone to refugees. Given that refugees accounted for nearly 62 per cent of the Gaza labour force, those gains had been less than proportional, particularly in the public sector. (www.unrwa.org)

The Jerusalem City Council's planning committee approved the construction of a new Jewish enclave, a 14-home project to be named Maale David, in the heart of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Ras al-Amoud in occupied East Jerusalem. (*France24, AFP*)

In a [statement](#), the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights strongly condemned the forcible deportation of Palestinian Legislative Committee member Ahmed Attoun from Jerusalem to Ramallah by the IDF. The Centre considered such deportation as tantamount to forcible displacement, which was prohibited under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. (www.pchrgaza.org)

In a [report](#) entitled "Alleged Investigation," the Israeli rights group Yesh Din found that the Israeli army's inquiries into Palestinian complaints against its soldiers had been frequently flawed and that less than 4 per cent resulted in indictment. ([www.yesh-din.org](#))
The British Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) had censured the Palestinian Diplomatic Mission to the UK for posting an interactive map on its website that described Israel as Palestine. Headlined "Discover Palestine", the map was aimed at promoting tourism. Users could click on to various cities, such as Haifa, in order to obtain tourist information. After receiving six complaints, ASA contacted the Palestinian Mission, and the map was amended. The mission explained that the map represented "Palestine in 1948". (*The Guardian*)
Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu decided not to hold a discussion and vote on a bill that would restrict foreign funding of non-governmental organizations. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Eighteen donors, at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee for Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA, [pledged](#) contributions to UNRWA's 2012 budget of over \$190 million. Several Governments expressed their intention to announce their pledges at a later date. (*UN Department of Public Information*)

UNESCO, in a [media advisory](#), announced that Norway had contributed NOK 7.1 million (around \$1.2 million) to support the UNESCO project of the Center for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram Al Sharif in Jerusalem. (*UNESCO*)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Grandi launched a 16-day [campaign](#) to end gender-based violence. Speaking at an agency training and awareness-raising centre in Jerusalem, Mr. Grandi said: "Gender-based violence not only affects the victims themselves, often women and girls, but their families, communities and society at large. I am pleased to see that all UNRWA departments, education, health and our relief departments are taking part in this initiative." (*UNRWA*)

8

An Israeli air strike on a car near a crowded park in downtown Gaza City killed two suspected militants, the second such attack during the week after a period of relative calm along the Israeli-Gaza border. Israel's military said that one of the militants had been involved in a suicide bombing in Israel five years ago that killed three Israeli civilians. It identified the other man as his nephew who was a member of Hamas' military wing. (*NPR, AP*)

A large Israeli force raided two villages near Ramallah leading to clashes with locals, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Liberman, in a meeting with Russian Federation Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in Moscow, praised the improvement in the economic ties between their two nations, but noted that they differed in their stances on foreign affairs, including developments in the Middle East. (*Ynetnews*)

Senior Israeli army officials said that the Israeli Government should strengthen the Fatah-led PA to avoid gains by Hamas in the elections in 2012, the Hebrew-language newspaper *Maariv* reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas would only agree to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2012 if voting took place in East Jerusalem, and Hamas was allowed to participate. (*Haaretz*)

The European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, issued a statement condemning the attack against a mosque in Burj al village. (*European Union*)

Hamas had ordered the departure of nearly all its staff at its Damascus headquarters by the following week after pressure from Turkey and Qatar. It will establish new headquarters in Cairo and Qatar. (*The Wall Street Journal*)

Israeli forces will finish building a barrier around Shu'fat refugee camp in north Jerusalem during the week. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A number of Jewish settlers fired at Palestinian shepherds near Yanun village, east of Nablus. (*Wafa*)

The Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of France [said](#): "France condemns the authorization granted by Jerusalem's municipal authorities to build 14 homes in a settlement in the heart of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Ras al-Amoud in East Jerusalem. The building of a settlement in this neighbourhood constitutes a direct obstacle to the two-State solution that Israel claims to support. This solution would mean establishing Jerusalem as the capital of the two States, Israel and the future Palestinian State." ([www.ambafrance-us.org](#))

The US Department of State said that it was "disappointed" by the new Israeli settlement activity but that it opposed a call by the Palestinians to take the issue to the Security Council. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces handed confiscation orders to 10 landowners in villages near Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested five Palestinians across the West Bank, including one recently released under the prisoner swap deal. (*Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, Adalah Center and the Al-Mizan Center for Human Rights issued a joint position paper against the extraction of false confessions under torture and extortion from Palestinian children and adolescents. (*Alresalah*)

A festival was held in Gaza to combat violence against women. (*UN Women*)

9

Israel carried out multiple air strikes against Hamas facilities in the Gaza Strip. A blast that occurred after a strike on a Hamas training camp in Gaza City flattened a nearby house, killing a 42-year-old civilian and wounding his wife and six of their children, two critically. Other houses were damaged by fire or shrapnel, and a total of 25 people were wounded, according to a Gaza health official. (*AP, Reuters*)

The Israeli military said that Palestinian militants had launched three rockets into Israel causing no casualties. (*AP*)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that his authorities were holding intensive talks with regional and international parties to stop Israel's escalation of attacks on Gaza. Egypt's Ambassador to the PA, Yasser Othman, said that Egypt was trying to renew a truce. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

11

Three people were hurt and eight were arrested at a demonstration in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh following the funeral of a Palestinian protester killed over the weekend during a local protest. Mustafa Tamimi, 28, succumbed to his wounds after being hit in the face on 9 December by a tear gas canister fired by an IDF soldier during the protest. Mr. Tamimi had been throwing stones at an armoured army jeep when he was shot by a soldier sitting on the rear of the vehicle. (*Haaretz*)

A Palestinian civilian and his daughter were wounded in an Israeli air strike on Gaza City, Palestinian medics said. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

At the World Policy Conference in Vienna, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that Israel may at some stage have to "take more assertive action" in the Gaza Strip after Palestinian fighters fired rockets into southern Israel amidst a series of Israeli bombardments that had killed five people since 7 December. Interior Minister Eli Yishai said that there will be no way around military action if attacks from Gaza continued, *The Jerusalem Post* reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Turkish President Abdullah Gül accused Israel of not recognizing Palestinian efforts to advance the peace process. He specifically referred to Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, whom he praised for making statements emphasizing democracy and a willingness to live in peace with Israelis, Istanbul daily *Today's Zaman* reported. President Gül's comments came as he returned to Turkey from Vienna, where he and Israeli Defense Minister Barak made efforts to avoid meeting each other during the World Policy Conference that both attended. President Gül was also quoted as saying that Israel could improve its relations with Turkey by making peace with the Palestinians and other Arab States. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel blamed the Palestinians for rejecting a call to hold face-to-face peace talks. Mark Regev, Spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, said that Israel had renewed an offer to hold direct talks with the Palestinians ahead of the visit by envoys of the Quartet on 14 December but said that Israel had learned that senior Palestinian official and Chief Negotiator Erekat had refused. (*Reuters*)

PA Minister of Foreign Affairs Malki said that officials were preparing an initiative at the UN to condemn Israeli settlements and aggression against Palestinians. Mr. Malki told *Voice of Palestine* radio that diplomats were working to gain the support of more than 140 countries for the proposal, which would censure Israel's attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, Riyadh Mansour, had begun contacts with Arab and regional officials over the initiative, he said, without specifying if the goal was a Security Council or General Assembly resolution. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli military official arrived in Cairo for talks on carrying out the second stage of a prisoner swap deal between Israel and Hamas, sources at Cairo airport said. "The talks will also deal with the development of the Egyptian-Israeli relations and cooperation in preserving security along the joint border of the two countries," added the sources, who declined to identify the Israeli official. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli authorities clashed violently with Palestinian inmates at Israeli Nafha prison, a prisoners' group reported. A lawyer from the prisoners' society said that she had met with the representative of the prisoners in the jail, Alaa Abu Jazar, who told her that a number of detainees had been moved to solitary confinement after the confrontation broke out on 27 November. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel closed a controversial wooden access ramp to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound over public safety fears, police said, sparking a war of words with Jordan and the Palestinians. The closure was swiftly denounced by the Palestinians and Jordan's powerful Islamist opposition as an act of "aggression" against the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. But Israel hit back, with an official pointing out that the closure would only affect non-Muslim visitors, and accused Jordan of reneging on an eleventh-hour deal that would have allowed the construction of a safer temporary bridge. The closure prompted a swift response from the PA President's Spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina, who warned that it was another Israeli "attack" on efforts to revive the moribund peace talks which could shake up the region. "These practices create a negative atmosphere in the entire region that could plunge the area into turmoil and tension," he warned. In Gaza, Hamas Spokesman Fawzi Barhum slammed it as an attack on sacred Muslim sites in Jerusalem. "This is a serious step that shows the Zionist scheme of aggression against the Al-Aqsa mosque," Mr. Barhum told *AFP*. "This is a violent act that amounts to a declaration of religious war on the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem." (*AFP*)

12

Gaza militants fired a rocket at southern Israel but it landed on open ground in the Negev desert. There were no reports of any injury, the military said. (*The Daily Star Lebanon*)

A Hamas official called for calm after a spike in cross-border violence between Palestinian militants and Israel. "It is necessary to restore calm and stop all types of aggression on our people," said Mohamed Awad, a Hamas Government minister. (*Haaretz*)

The IDF scrambled to the otherwise calm border with Jordan after several right-wing activists took control of structures located near the border with Israel's neighbour to the east. The incident began when about 25 to 30 activists reportedly seized abandoned churches near the Qasr al-Yahud holy site, believed to be the site of the baptism of Jesus, in a deliberate provocation meant to signal to the Jordanian authorities to keep out of matters concerning the Temple Mount. (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian police shot at a group of Israelis illegally visiting a West Bank religious site, injuring one, Palestinian security officials said. The police opened fire after shouting warnings at the small group of Israeli worshippers who had entered Joseph's Tomb, near the northern West Bank city of Nablus overnight, said the officials. The Israeli military had no comment on the incident. *Israeli Public Radio* said that the group was composed of seven ultra-Orthodox Jews, who had entered the site without the required coordination with the Israeli military. (*AFP*)

Israeli Vice-Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon declared that many Arab countries were not ready for democracy. He said that Israel learned a bitter lesson about democracy in the Middle East when Islamist Hamas militants had come to power in free elections in the Palestinian territories in 2006. The following year, the group violently overran the Gaza Strip, ousting forces loyal to President Abbas. Democratic elections, Mr. Yaalon said, do not necessarily make for democratic practices. "We are not sure, to say the least, what we witness now is real democratization," he told a group of foreign journalists. "Hamas exploited the democratic rules of the game ... to impose a non-democratic regime." "We believe that you can't reach democracy by elections," he added. "We believe in a long process. It should start by education." Tunisia might be ripe for democracy, he said. But Palestinians, he said, are not. "We believe the Palestinian society is not mature (enough) to exercise civil society," he said. (*The Washington Post*)

Committees working on the terms of a reconciliation deal between Fatah and Hamas had made little progress, and increasing political detentions may threaten the accord, Hamas Spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said. During their last meeting in Cairo, Hamas had given the Fatah delegation a list of 104 affiliates detained in West Bank jails, compared to 35 names on the table when the agreement was signed in May, Mr. Barhoum said. Seven months later, the deal to unite Gaza and the West Bank under a single administration, and solve divisive issues including the structure of the PLO, a national security force, the holding of fair elections, and release of political detainees, had yet to be implemented. Committees appointed to resolve these issues had met several times since May, but without any tangible positive outcome on the ground, Mr. Barhoum said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was "deeply concerned" at Israel's announcement of new settlements near the Palestinian town of Bethlehem. Mr. Ban said that Israelis and Palestinians must avoid "provocative actions" as the international community sought to bring the two sides back into direct talks, his Spokesman, Martin Nesirky, said. "The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about today's reports," Mr. Nesirky said after Israel's latest settlement announcement. Mr. Ban called on Israel "to freeze all settlement activity" condemning the settlements as contrary to international law and the road map to peace set out by the Quartet. (www.un.org)

The European Union announced its latest contribution to two major sectors of support to the PA: the sustainable management of natural resources and the rule of law by launching a €10 million water desalination facility project in the Gaza Strip and the establishment of the Diploma Programme of the Palestinian Judicial Institute. John Gatt-Rutter, Deputy European Union Representative to the West Bank, Gaza Strip and UNRWA, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, as well as representatives of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to note the agreement for the short-term low volume desalination facility that would be constructed in the Gaza Strip over the coming three years. EU also marked the onset of a two-year project establishing the first Diploma for Judicial Studies in the Palestinian Judicial system. Through a €1.5 million grant, the EU will support the Palestinian Judicial Institute in carrying out all preparatory work towards an initial training programme for future judges and prosecutors. (*Wafa*)

According to a new UNRWA report, despite modest economic news in the West Bank, the number of unemployed refugees had grown by nearly 1 per cent in the first half of the year, to over 50,000 people, as unemployment generally in the West Bank had declined. At 27.4 per cent, the

unemployment rate for refugees was about 5 percentage points above the average of the West Bank as a whole. "These figures show once more that the refugees continue to bear the brunt of economic hardship in the West Bank," said UNRWA Spokesman Chris Gunness, "making the need for our emergency services greater than ever". (www.unrwa.org)

Israeli authorities demolished a home in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina after conducting a raid. Witnesses told *Ma'an News Agency* that the home belonged to Nidal al-Razim, whose brother had been freed as part of the October prisoner exchange deal between Hamas and Israel. Authorities claimed that the house had been built without a license. Witnesses said that the house was demolished before allowing the family to gather their belongings. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli Government approved 40 new houses to replace trailers at a West Bank settlement, the settlement's mayor said, drawing criticism from Palestinians. Mayor Oded Revivi said that the homes would create a permanent neighbourhood north-east of the Efrat settlement, replacing settlers' trailers currently on the site. He said that final approval was given the previous week. (*AP*)

Palestinian sources said that dozens of settlers from Yitzhar entered a nearby village and threw rocks at the residents' houses. The Rabbis for Human Rights organization said that houses had been damaged and that the settlers had tried to set property on fire. IDF forces called to the scene removed the settlers and a spokesperson said that the report was being checked. (*Ynetnews.com*)

Some 300 settlers, fearing eviction, hurled stones at Palestinian vehicles on the main road near the settlement of Ramat Gilad. In a separate incident, some 50 settlers and right-wing activists broke into the Ephraim Territorial Brigade's base in the West Bank to protest the possible eviction of several illegal outposts early in the day. Once inside the base, they torched tires, hurled Molotov cocktails and stones and caused damage to vehicles.

A settler from Beit El was arrested and police had launched an investigation. (*Ynetnews.com*)

Settlers threw rocks at a Palestinian car on a main road east of Qalqilya injuring three people including a toddler, the driver of the vehicle said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Following the closure of the Mughrabi Gate Bridge, Jordan announced that it would send a delegation to examine the condition of the bridge and decide whether it truly posed any risk to passers-by. Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh said that Jordan was in direct contact with Israel to ensure that Israel had not change the status quo. No agreement had yet been reached as to the delegation's composition, but it could include representatives from UNESCO and the Muslim Waqf. (*Maariv*)

The Human Rights Committee of the European Parliament announced the adoption of a proposal to declare an international campaign to release Palestinian prisoners starting in 2012. The proposal came following a meeting held at the European Parliament attended by Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqe, during which he called on the Parliament to adopt a clear decision to work on the release of the Palestinian prisoners, similar to the decisions that had been taken in order to release the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The institution announced that it was adopting a new campaign to release the Palestinian prisoners and sending a fact-finding committee to investigate the Palestinian prisoners' conditions in Israeli jails. (*Wafa*)

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), in a press release, condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing policies adopted by Israel occupation authorities aimed at creating a Jewish majority in occupied East Jerusalem, the latest of which was the designation of Shu'fat checkpoint as an international crossing, which officially took effect in the morning. PCHR emphasized that the opening of this crossing, deep in Palestinian territory, was part of Israeli policies aimed at cutting Jerusalem off from the West Bank and perpetuating Israel's annexation of the city in violation of international humanitarian law and international legitimacy resolutions. (www.pchrgaza.org)

On the occasion of the sixty-third anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), the BADIL Resource Center for Residency and Refugee Rights issued a [statement](#) to bring the attention of the international community to the enduring denial of the Palestinian right to reparation, rehabilitation and, in particular, their right to return. (*IMEMC*)

Salam Ya Seghar (SYS), a fund-raising campaign dedicated to helping Palestinian children, donated \$1 million for programmes focused on sustainable development that would be carried out by Oxfam GB. SYS had signed a contract with Oxfam on 8 December at Sharjah's Al Seef Palace to run two different programmes, the first of which would serve 760 schools in Gaza by improving their educational achievements in mathematics, geography, English, Arabic and science. The second programme would focus on improving children's food security in Gaza. (*Gulftoday.ae*)

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PA President Abbas will meet with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton the following day, an aide to President Abbas said. The talks would focus mainly on efforts to revive the stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and the Palestinian quest to obtain membership in UN bodies, said President Abbas' adviser Majdi al-Khaldi. (*Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas met with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. Following the meeting, President Abbas said that his French counterpart had reiterated his support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. President Abbas also met with France's Socialist Party Presidential candidate François Hollande and discussed the stalled peace process. (www.lemonde.fr)

Israeli Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar said that the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank was a "dangerous move" which would not "bring peace". Mr. Sa'ar had traveled to Shiloh settlement in order to announce a list of sites Israeli school students would visit as part of a programme for the students to get to know "the historic roots of the land of Israel". (*Haaretz*)

Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar said that it was unlikely that Palestinian elections would be held in May 2012, as planned, since more time would be needed to prepare. PA President Abbas had announced the previous month that long-overdue elections were to be held on 4 May 2012 as part of a reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas. The two sides had also agreed to meet in Cairo on 18 December to finalize the implementation of the deal and the formation of an interim unity Government in the run-up to the elections. "So far, the implementation of the reconciliation agreement is at a standstill," Mr. al-Zahar said. (*DPA*)

The Palestinian flag was raised for the first time at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris at a ceremony presided by UNESCO Director-General Iri Bokova. PA President Abbas looked on as the flag was raised and the Palestinian anthem played, just weeks after Palestine was admitted to UNESCO in a move that had sparked fury and reprisals from the US and Israel. "President Abbas wants to show the importance he attaches to UNESCO," a Palestinian diplomat said ahead of the ceremony. "And this is the first time that the flag will be flown at the headquarters of a UN institution." (*AFP*)

PA Minister of Planning Ali Jarbawi and Minister of Local Government Khaled Qawasmi and the Head of Development Cooperation in the German Representative Office, Marc Engelhardt, signed €13 million grant agreements for the development of local councils and job creation. (*Wafa*)

While clashing on most issues fundamental to the Israeli-Palestinian water crisis at a conference in Ashdod, Environmental Protection Minister Gilad Erdan and Palestinian Water Minister Shaddad Atti agreed that the current water situation must change and that cooperation between the two entities must grow stronger. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces, without prior notice, demolished three buildings belonging to three Beit Jala families in the south of Jerusalem after claiming that they had been built on Israeli land. (*Wafa*)

A Gazan man was detained by Israeli forces in the Egyptian Sinai and taken to Israel for interrogation, a close friend of the man's family said. The PA liaison department confirmed that a Gazan had been detained by Israeli forces but could not provide further details. The arrest was the first such incident of its kind. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces detained 14 Palestinians in home raids across the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Sasson Gabai, a member of the Jerusalem City Council, called for the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque to all Muslim worshippers in an attempt to pressure Muslims into accepting the demolition of the bridge of the historic al-Magharba Gate that led to the Mosque. He stated that, "All entrances leading to the Al-Aqsa Mosque must be closed to Muslim worshippers until the Islamic Waqf Department agrees to the demolishing of the bridge". (*IMEMC*)

Israeli demolition of homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem had displaced more than 1,000 Palestinians in 2011, which was double the previous year, a coalition of 20 human rights and aid organizations said in a joint statement. "Since the beginning of the year, more than 500 Palestinian homes, wells, rainwater harvesting cisterns, and other essential structures have been destroyed in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, displacing more than 1,000 Palestinians". "This is more than double the number of people displaced over the same period in 2010, and the highest figure since at least 2005," it added, citing UN figures. It went on to criticize the Quartet. "There is a growing disconnect between the Quartet talks and the situation on the ground," the statement quoted Oxfam International's Jeremy Hobbs as having said. (*AFP*)

14

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu convened an urgent meeting of top IDF, police, security and justice officials after the right-wing extremists attack on an IDF base in the West Bank. He said that the attack had "crossed all the lines" and that he intended to establish a special task force to tackle the growing phenomenon. The Israeli Government would significantly beef up intelligence efforts among right-wing extremists and increase the number of people to be barred from the West Bank. Intelligence officials had reportedly been warned repeatedly over the past few months that right-wing activists would try to sabotage military vehicles inside bases to thwart attempts to evacuate outposts. (*Haaretz*)

In an interview with *Israel Army Radio*, Israeli Defense Minister Barak said that Israel needed to see if the actions of right-wing extremists could be legally defined as terrorism. Israeli Justice Ministry officials were expected to draw up directives that would characterize "price-tag" attacks as terrorism, giving the authorities more leeway in going after suspects. (*Haaretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Dozens of Israeli right-wing activists clashed with police officers in Jerusalem amidst attempts to arrest suspects linked to recent "price tag" attacks. (*Haaretz*)

Two Palestinian vehicles were set on fire and sprayed with graffiti near Hebron and Qalqilya in the West Bank. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A Palestinian man in his twenty's was in critical condition after having been shot by Israeli soldiers while bird hunting east of Gaza in the Shujaiyeh neighbourhood. An Israeli army spokeswoman said that the man had been identified as a "suspicious individual" approaching the security fence. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Tens of thousands of Hamas supporters in Gaza marked the twenty-fourth anniversary of the founding of the party. During the occasion, Hamas released statistics on the movement's killing of 1,365 Israelis and wounding 6,411, conducting 87 militant attacks and firing 11,093 rockets into Israel since its establishment. (*Israel National News*, *Ynetnews*)

The Quartet held separate talks with Israeli and Palestinians officials in Jerusalem without any breakthrough in sight. Reiterating the call for the parties to create conducive environment for restarting talks, the Quartet envoys urged the parties to refrain from provocative actions. The US Department of State had said that it was sending its Middle East peace envoy, David Hale, to Jerusalem as part of its "efforts to get the two parties to put forward concrete proposals and to agree to come back to the table together". (*AFP*, *UNSCO*)

PA President Abbas met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton in Brussels. They discussed the peace process, the latest developments in the Palestinian request to gain full UN membership, national reconciliation and developments in the Middle East, with Ms. Ashton issuing a [statement](#) after the meeting. (www.consilium.europa.eu, *Wafa*)

Senior Palestinian negotiator Erekat told *Voice of Palestine* radio that the Quartet should question the Israeli Government for continuing settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "It's time for the Quartet to take a serious stance and stop dealing with Israel as a State above the law". (*Xinhua*)

The EU launched a €1.5 million project to improve the livelihoods and food security levels of poor rural families through improvements in the availability and management of water for agricultural purposes. The project was to be implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and was to be finalized at the end of 2012. (*Wafa*)

Israel reopened an access ramp to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound two days after it was closed. (*AFP*, *Al Jazeera*)

Unknown attackers tried to set a disused mosque in Jerusalem on fire and scrawled anti-Arab slogans on the walls in an apparent "price tag" vengeance attack. Slogans insulting the Prophet Mohammed and Arabs, along with graffiti reading "price tag", were spray-painted on the walls of the building in central Jerusalem. (*AFP*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu announced new measures against Israeli "rioters" who attack security forces. The army would have the authority to make arrests and offenders would be tried in military courts. They could be placed in administrative detention, and there would be an increase in orders barring individuals from specific areas of the West Bank. But he stopped short of adopting a recommendation by his Justice and Internal Security Ministers to classify offenders as "terrorists". (*AFP*)

"The increasing rate of settlement expansion and house demolitions is pushing Palestinians to the brink, destroying their livelihoods and prospects for a just and durable peace," said Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society released a list of detainees to be freed in the second phase of the prisoners swap deal. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested PA lawmaker Ayman Daraghme, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council for the Hamas Change and Reform Bloc, following a raid on his house in Ramallah. Mr. Daraghme had been imprisoned for more than 20 months on charges of "membership in a prohibited organization" and for participating in Palestinian legislative elections, and released about a year ago. He was the twenty-fourth Palestinian lawmaker and the twenty-first member of the Hamas legislative bloc to be imprisoned by Israel. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian activists thwarted an attempt by Israeli and Palestinian peace activists to hold a conference in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. Earlier during the week, a similar conference, organized by the Israeli-Palestinian Confederation, had been cancelled at the last minute as a result of Palestinian protesters staging a demonstration in front of the West Jerusalem hotel where the gathering was supposed to take place. Political activists said that they opposed the conferences as they were a form of "normalization" between Israel and the Palestinians. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

15

Israeli forces, along with bulldozers, entered northern Gaza near the Erez crossing, witnesses and the army said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A rocket from Gaza landed near the Gaza border fence. No injuries were reported in the attack. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Iceland formally recognized the Palestinian State at a ceremony in Reykjavik attended by Foreign Minister Össur Skarphéðinsson and his Palestinian counterpart, Riad Malki. (*AFP*)

Reiterating its support for the creation of an independent State of Palestine, Indian Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed, at a function marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, called for the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians for the final resolution of the conflict. "India had welcomed the direct talks between Israel and Palestine. The continued stalemate in the situation and hardening of positions is a matter of concern," he said. (*daijiworld.com*)

The Mayor of Bethlehem, Victor Batarseh, after his annual Christmas address, said that the international community should boycott Israel until it accepts Palestinian aspirations for independence. "We have a right to self-determination," he told reporters in Bethlehem. "We are peaceful people. We want peace," he said, after announcing the start of Christmas festivities. "But it must be a just and legal peace based on UN resolutions ... the only way Israel will agree to peace is if it is forced," he added. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An opinion poll conducted by the Arab World for Research and Development showed that 86 per cent of Palestinians supported holding presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2012. About 44 per cent supported electing Mr. Abbas as President while 18 per cent supported Hamas leader Haniyeh. In parliamentary elections, Fatah would receive 46 per cent support against Hamas 17 per cent for Hamas. (*Wafa*)

A truckload of tomatoes and bell peppers and five trucks carrying strawberries crossed the Gaza Strip for export, crossings officials said. Palestinian liaison official Raed Fattouh said that Israel had opened the sole functioning Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza to allow the small convoy through as part of an agreement with the Dutch Government to permit limited exports from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli legal rights organization Gisha said that the winter export deal allowed just 1 per cent of the 400 export trucks a day Israel had agreed to allow under a 2005 deal with the PA. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A 17-year-old girl from the "Beit Hadassah" Hebron settlement was scheduled to be charged for allegedly throwing rocks at a Palestinian vehicle. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Settlers set fire to a local mosque in the village of Burqa, near Ramallah, in the latest "price tag" attack, as Israeli troops demolished part of the illegal settlement outpost of "Mitzpe Yizhar" near Nablus. The interior of the local mosque had been doused with petrol and set alight, damaging carpets, walls, chairs and electrical wirings. Israeli officials condemned the mosque attack and President Shimon Peres, meeting with settler leaders on the tense situation, said that such attacks were "pouring oil on the flames" of regional anger at Israel. (*Reuters, The New York Times, AFP*)

IDF officials ordered forces stationed at the Ramat Gilad settlement to end their deployment in the community after settlers had harassed several female soldiers. The incident occurred during the course of a riot which had broken out between the settlers and the soldiers over the demolition of the settlement outpost of "Mitzpe Yizhar". (*Xinhua, Ynetnews*)

PA President Abbas' Spokesperson, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, condemned the torching of the Burqa mosque as a declaration of war by settlers against the Palestinian people. (*Ynetnews*)

The Head Rabbi of the Teqoa settlement near Bethlehem, Menachem Froman, said that Jewish extremists who attack Palestinian mosques and property should be expelled from the country. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a press release, PLO Executive Committee member Ashrawi strongly denounced the recent torching and vandalism of the al-Nebi Akasha Mosque in Jerusalem and the al-Noor Mosque in the village of Burqa, north-east of Ramallah. (*Wafa*)

Settlers cut down more than 15 olive trees in Burin village, south of Nablus, according to witnesses. (*Wafa*)

Jerusalem Mayor Barkat said that land beyond the separation wall could eventually be abandoned to the PA, Israeli media reported, while those inside the wall should be annexed. Mr. Barkat also recommended maintaining the barrier. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel published a further list of 550 Palestinian prisoners to be freed on 18 December to complete the swap deal. No senior militants were on the list, Palestinian sources said. The group of 544 men and six women had been selected by Israel and did not include any members of Hamas or the Islamic Jihad. The Media Director of Gaza's Ministry of Prisoners, Riyad al-Ashqar, said that 55 children were among those due for release.

(*Ma'an News Agency, AFP*)

The Palestinian Ministry of Detainees' Affairs expressed dissatisfaction over the second phase of the Shalit prisoner swap deal and held Hamas negotiators responsible for giving Israel the full right to choose 550 Palestinian prisoners to be released on 18 December. (*Gulfnews.com*)

The Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association said that Israel had detained almost the same number of Palestinians they had freed in the first stage of a prisoner exchange deal in the two months since the swap. Israeli forces had detained nearly 470 Palestinians since the release of 477 prisoners from Israeli jail in exchange for captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of France, Alain Juppé, issued [a statement](#) thanking the Israeli Government for their decision to include French-Palestinian national Salah Hamuri, who had been convicted of trying to assassinate a Jewish religious leader and had been due to complete his seven-year sentence in March, in the list of prisoners eligible for release under the prisoner exchange deal with Israel. (*France Diplomatie*)

Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN Riyad Mansour assured the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, during its regular meeting, that Palestinian effort for full membership in the UN and its agencies was not a provocation but rather the exercise of their legal right to sovereignty and independence. During the same meeting, the Committee approved a request by Saudi Arabia for observer status to the Committee. (*UN News Centre*)

Brazil contributed \$960,000 to UNRWA and announced a further donation of \$7.5 million. (*UNRWA*)

The Republic of Korea agreed to provide UNRWA \$400,000 to upgrade schools in Gaza with new computers. (*UNRWA*)

16

The IDF Central Command allocated 30 per cent of its forces deployed in the West Bank for "price tag" attack-related missions, the largest proportion in years. Since the settler attack against the Efraim Regional Brigade headquarters, the IDF had established a special rapid-response force whose job will be to protect bases and disperse crowds. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Recent attacks by right-wing extremists on IDF soldiers in the West Bank were just one manifestation of the violence to which many had been subjected during their service in recent years. Both regular and reserve soldiers, including junior officers, spoke about the complicated situation they found themselves in: having to protect the settlers while at the same time being attacked by them. "Our purpose there is to protect the Jews, but they generate many of the problems. It's very confusing," said Nadav Bigelman, a combat soldier who was discharged last year. (*Haaretz*)

According to a classified working paper produced by European embassies in Israel, the EU should consider Israel's treatment of its Arab population a "core issue, not second tier to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict". The document was unprecedented in that it dealt with internal Israeli issues. According to European diplomats and senior Foreign Ministry officials, it had been written and sent to EU Headquarters in Brussels behind the back of the Israeli Government. Other issues the document dealt with included the lack of progress in the peace process, the continued occupation of the territories, Israel's definition of itself as Jewish and democratic and the influence of the Israeli Arab population. (*Haaretz*)

An appropriations bill for the coming fiscal year that had been released by House Republicans would allow a continuation of aid to the Palestinians as long as the PA did not join any more UN organizations in its bid to increase its global diplomatic standing. (*Los Angeles Times*)

The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation was due to discuss on 18 December a bill that would legalize construction on private Palestinian land.

According to the bill, initiated by Knesset member Zevulun Orlev, Palestinian owners would not be able to demand the clearing of residential construction on their land if they failed to claim it for four years after construction had been completed. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli forces detained Sheikh Khader Adnan, a senior Islamic Jihad leader, in a raid on Jenin. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian and wounded two in the central Gaza Strip. An Israeli military spokeswoman said that troops along the Israeli side of the border had heard an explosion and responded with fire toward "areas suspected as points where terrorists operate". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli naval ships opened fire on a Palestinian fishing boat off the Gaza coast injuring a fisherman. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A security guard was stabbed in the settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim" in a suspected attack by a Palestinian man. The guard was slightly injured. (*Ynetnews*)

The Palestinian branch of the international campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel held its third annual conference in Hebron. (*IMEMC*)

18

Three Palestinians sustained moderate injuries when Israeli unexploded ordnance detonated east of Khan Yunis in Gaza. (*Wafa*)

A Palestinian child was seriously injured after being run over by a settler bus on a road south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces detained two Palestinians fishing off the Gaza coast and confiscated their equipment. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Four people were injured as Israeli soldiers clashed with Palestinian families outside Ofer prison in the West Bank. Soldiers fired tear gas and rubber bullets while young men began throwing rocks. (*Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

The Spanish Consul General in East Jerusalem, Alfonso Portabales, stressed his country's supportive position towards the Palestinian cause regardless of the ruling party in Spain, during his meeting with Fatah Central Committee Member Nabil Sha'ath in Ramallah. (*Wafa*)

Hamas and Fatah leaders applauded progress in the unity deal between their parties after meeting in Cairo, but sounded a note of caution that more work had yet to be done to end the division. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Fatah Central Committee member Sha'ath told *Voice of Palestine* radio that he would visit Gaza on 23 or 24 December, after leaders of the Palestinian factions returned from Cairo to Gaza, to "reinforce efforts to complete the reconciliation and end division". (*Wafa*)

The Israeli Housing Ministry published tenders for 1,028 homes to be built in settlements: 500 homes in "Har Homa" [Jabal Abu-Ghneim] in East Jerusalem; 348 in the West Bank settlement of "Beitar Illit"; and 180 in "Givat Ze'ev", which lay between Jerusalem and Ramallah. (*Haaretz*)

PA President Abbas condemned the Israeli plan to publish tenders for the construction of homes in three settlements. The decision "contradicts efforts to revive the peace process," Presidential Spokesman Abu Rudeineh said. (*Wafa*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu rejected a legislative attempt by right-wing Knesset members to legalize West Bank outposts and prevent any further demolitions. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel released 550 Palestinian prisoners in the second half of a swap deal. This second phase involved what the Israelis called "light security prisoners". None had been convicted of killing or wounding anyone, and none were members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad. (*The New York Times*)

The spokesman for the military wing of Hamas, Abu Obaida, said, referring to the prisoner swap deal: "This achievement will not be the end of the story ... We will continue to work for the prisoners at whatever cost." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

UNICEF welcomed the release of 55 Palestinian child detainees by the Israeli Government as part of a prisoner swap deal and said that it looked forward to more progress on the issue of detained children. As of 1 December, a total of 161 Palestinians under 18 years of age were in Israeli military detention. (*UNICEF*)

Sporadic clashes broke out between armed factions in Lebanon's largest Palestine refugee camp, Ein el-Hilweh, after the bodyguard of an official in the camp had been killed. Fighters from Fatah clashed with gunmen belonging to extremist Islamist parties. (*Reuters*)

The Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs signed an agreement with the Italian Embassy to implement the third phase of a project to raise the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Jerash Camp in Jordan. Under the deal, the Italian Government will provide €1.1 million for the camp's social development schemes. (*Petra News Agency*)

The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, wound up a mission to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory expressing concern at Israeli treatment of Palestinian demonstrators. "Any use of force against demonstrators or rioters must be minimal and proportionate to the threat posed," he said. "While the use of tear gas to disperse a crowd may be legitimate under certain circumstances, tear gas canisters should never be fired directly at demonstrators." (*AFP*)

19

Unidentified assailants torched three cars in the West Bank village of Beitin, north of Ramallah, in a possible revenge attack by settlers. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces detained 10 people across the West Bank. An Israeli army spokeswoman said that seven people were detained in Jenin, two siblings, Fatima Dawabsha, 21, and her brother Omar, 20, in Duma village near Nablus, and one person in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces detained three men from al-Bureij refugee camp after they reportedly approached the fence separating Israel and Gaza. Witnesses said that the men had been trying to cross the border illegally to work in Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli military forces arrested the owner of a money exchange shop in Hebron and confiscated the contents of the store. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian negotiator Erakat warned that the PA would collapse unless real progress was made in the peace process in the near future. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, at a joint press conference with PA President Abbas in the central Turkish city of Konya, reaffirmed Turkey's support for the Palestinian cause and struggle and said that the establishment of the Palestinian State, within the borders drawn in 1967, was not only a necessity but also an obligation of humanity. (www.worldbulletin.net)

Hatem Abdel Kader, a former PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, said that the Fatah leadership had decided to foil all informal meetings between Israelis and Palestinians. "We will try to thwart any Palestinian-Israeli meeting, even if it is held in Tel Aviv or West Jerusalem," he said. He said that it was inconceivable that such meetings were being held at a time when Israel continued to build settlements and refused to accept the pre-1967 lines. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, while meeting with a group of Palestinians who had recently been released from Israeli prisons, pledged the country's all-out support for Palestinians, describing "resistance" as the sole path for Palestine's liberation. (*Press TV*)

The Representative of Denmark to the PA, Lars Rehov, said during his meeting with Fatah Central Committee member Sha'ath in Ramallah, that Denmark and Sweden were committed to voting in favour of Palestine in the future. (*Wafa*)

A spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany was urging Israel to refrain from constructing new settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Mr. Georg Streiter said that Israel's recent announcement conveyed "a devastating message with regard to the current efforts to resume peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians." He said that Germany "urgently calls on the Israeli Government to refrain from inviting bids for the apartments". (*AP*)

The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court rejected two separate lawsuits seeking the eviction of two Palestinian families from homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan. The lawsuits had been filed by two groups closely linked to Elad, an organization supporting Jewish settlements in the area.

(Haaretz)

A mosque in Bani Naim, south of Hebron, was sprayed with anti-Islamic and pro-settler graffiti. (AFP)

Five cars were torched in the West Bank village of Beitin, north of Ramallah. (AFP)

Settlers from the West Bank outpost of "Ramat Gilad" and Israeli Defense Ministry officials were working on a compromise that would prevent the looming demolition of the outpost, *Ynetnews* reported. The compromise would mean that five structures that were currently located on private Palestinian land would be moved a few metres closer to the outpost itself, supposedly preventing the eviction. (*Ynetnews*)

According to a [press release](#), the European Commission had adopted a new assistance package for the Occupied Palestinian Territory for 2012 amounting to €160.4 million. Two thirds of the package would go to the PA to help it cover wages and pensions for essential civilian workers, and social allowances for vulnerable Palestinian families. (www.europa.eu)

The United Kingdom announced that it would help build 12 new schools for refugee children in Gaza, British International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said. The £14.6 million donation would be used by UNRWA and was expected to benefit up to 24,000 children. (www.reliefweb.int)

Dozens of Palestinian refugees protested at UNRWA Headquarters in Gaza calling for it to rebuild their homes five years after they had been pulled down for safety reasons. UNRWA Spokesman in Gaza Adnan Abu Hasna said that the agency was working to bring in the necessary materials. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association denounced the Israeli army for the daily kidnappings of children and youth from the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem, adding that the army had kidnapped more than 21 youths, including 11 children during the last 15 days. (*IMEMC*)

The Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture announced that it had been forced to postpone a conference on the Arab Spring's impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a result of the Palestinian decision to halt all informal meetings with Israel. The Fatah leadership had decided on the suspension of contacts over concerns that Israel would exploit them to shift blame for the deadlocked peace process onto the Palestinians. (*Haaretz*)

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Israeli military raided Tulkarm and its refugee camp near Ramallah, clashes erupting between the troops and locals. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces imposed a curfew on Yatma village south of Nablus because of a settlers' claim that armed Palestinians had fired at them near the "Rechelim" settlement. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Knesset members Ibrahim Sarsur and Ahmad Tibi presented the Knesset with a bill suggesting that vandalism of a synagogue, a mosque, a church or a helwa (Druze house of worship) will carry a mandatory six-year prison sentence, and that anyone convicted of inciting such acts will be sentenced to two years. (*Ynetnews*)

Permanent Observer of Palestine at the UN Mansour called on the Security Council to act against Israeli violations against Palestinians and hold the Israeli Government accountable for its provocative actions. In a letter addressed to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, he focused on the settlers' attacks against Palestinians and said that the international community's silence over the Israeli crimes and Israel's rejection of submitting to international law will lead to major failure in efforts to revive the peace process and achieve a two-State solution. (*Ynetnews, WAFA*)

PLO Executive Committee member and Chief Negotiator Erakat said that Israel had sent messages to some countries that PA President Abbas was not its partner and that it was thus looking for alternative security and economic options. He added that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was working to convert the PA's purpose into a security function while paying salaries in order to keep the situation calm in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas met with Turkish President Abdullah Gül in Ankara. President Gül reiterated Turkey's commitment to the Palestinian cause as the two leaders reviewed regional developments and discussed bilateral relations. They also discussed recent unity talks in Cairo and the implementation of a reconciliation deal. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council issued a final communiqué demanding that the international community take a decisive stand to coerce Israel to fully withdraw from all occupied Arab territories to the 1967 borders, and to respect international resolutions and laws in this regard.

The Supreme Council stated that it condemned the decision by the Israeli authorities to build settlement units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and construct a road to link the settlements with occupied East Jerusalem in order to isolate the city from its Palestinian surroundings and change its demographic nature. It expressed support for the State of Palestine's request for admission as a member of the UN. (*Khaleej Times, Saudi Press Agency*)

The Mayor of Naples, Luigi de Magistris, decided that the current Naples municipality would deal with Palestine and its institutions in Italy as those of a recognized State. (*WAFA*)

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, strongly condemned Israel's decision ratifying the construction of more than 1,000 new settlement units in Jerusalem as a flagrant violation of international law. He said that the quickened pace of settlement construction on Palestinian lands was part of Israeli attempts to create a new fait accompli on the ground, thus blocking the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. (www.oic-oci.org)

Representatives of all Palestinian factions were meeting in Cairo to discuss ways of implementing a stalled reconciliation deal. Officials played down expectations of a breakthrough with Fatah delegation head Azzam al-Ahmed telling *AFP* that he did not expect any agreement on the key issues of security and interim Government "before the end of January". "This meeting has one aim: to put in place mechanisms for ending the Palestinian division," he said. On the agenda were key issues such as the formation of a caretaker cabinet, security, parliamentary and presidential elections, which were to take place in May 2012, and the reform of the PLO. Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas delegation official, said he hoped that the parties would make progress on the release of political prisoners held by both sides. (*AFP*)

In an interview with Egyptian newspaper *al-Shorouk*, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil Elaraby, stressed that the Quartet was required to make efforts towards finding a solution to end the Arab-Israeli conflict instead of managing it. The solution to the Palestinian problem lay in enabling the Palestinian people to establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the exercise of their right to self-determination, said Mr. Elaraby. (*WAFA*)

MERCOSUR signed a free trade agreement with Palestine during its forty-second summit in Montevideo. The document was signed by PA Foreign Minister Malki and his counterparts from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. (*Prensa Latina*)

EU had launched a €10 million project to erect a desalination facility over the next three years in Gaza to address the difficult water situation. (*The*

Jerusalem Post)

The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, told reporters after a Security Council meeting, which he had described as anything but routine: "There is one delegation which would not want to hear anything about ... any kind of a statement [on settlements], which believes that things will ... settle themselves miraculously." He added: "The call for bilateral negotiations without preconditions would seem a normal thing," but the Palestinians were overwhelmed militarily and in every other way by the Israelis and without preconditions they would not get a fair deal in negotiations. Four EU Security Council members (France, Germany, Portugal and the UK) said in a joint statement:

"One of the themes that emerged was the severely damaging effect that increased settlement construction and settler violence is having on the ground and on the prospects of a return to negotiations." The Permanent Representative of South Africa, Baso Sangqu, read a statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, describing settlement activities as illegal and "the main impediment to the two-State solution". The Permanent Representative of Brazil, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, echoed Ambassador Sangqu's words in a statement on behalf of Brazil, India and South Africa.

The Permanent Representative of Lebanon, Nawaf Salam, made similar remarks on behalf of the Arab Group. Permanent Observer of Palestine Mansour told reporters that "one powerful member of the Security Council" was preventing it from dealing with the settlements issue and other problems related to the Middle East peace process. (*AFP, Reuters, The Australian*)

Israeli forces, supported by over 30 military vehicles, bulldozed a main road serving several villages in southern Nablus, a PA official said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces demolished barracks in Silwan in East Jerusalem, reportedly in order to set up a parking lot for settlers in the area. (*Wafa*)

The "Judea and Samaria Joint Residents' Council" officially launched a campaign meant to legalize the "Migron" settlement outpost. The campaign aimed to promote legislation that would legalize various outposts which had been slated for demolition. (*ynetnews*)

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. (www.un.org)

21

IDF soldiers unleashed police dogs at a Palestinian woman and arrested her son, Mohammad, 25, during a raid of her family home in Edna, west of Hebron. Spokesman of the National Committee against the Wall and Settlements in Beit Ummar, Mohammed Awad, said that in addition, Israeli forces raided the town and arrested Rafat Sabarneh, 18, and Hussam Abu Mariah, 19. (*Wafa*)

The IDF arrested 17 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank, 10 of whom were arrested in Jenin, another 4 in Hebron and 3 in Jedida, south of Ramallah. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinian medical sources reported that a 19-year-old Palestinian worker was shot in the leg by Israeli forces while he was working in the Bedouin village in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip, describing his wounds as moderate. (*IMEMC*)

PA President Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal met in Cairo for reconciliation talks. (*AFP*)

Hamas Spokesman Fawzi Barhoum, in a statement, announced that Palestinian factions meeting in Egypt had reached agreement on six steps to be taken as part of ongoing reconciliation talks. He said that a commission of nine members will take charge of elections, headed by Hanna Nasser, Chairman of the PA Central Elections Commission, and will include Rami Hamdallah, Yasser Mousa Harb, Mazin Sisalem, Khawlah Shakhshir, Shukri Nashashibi, Ahmad al-Khalidi, Ishak Muhanna and Yousif Awadallah. The names will be reviewed by PA President Abbas, who will issue a decree to form a new elections commission. Factions had also agreed that a unity Government should be sworn in by the end of January 2012 and that all political prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza Strip should be released before the end of January 2012. An inter-factional committee will be formed to deal with freedom of movement and passport issues. It was decided to delay the issue of PLO membership. The agreement endorsed a social reconciliation committee to carry out its work to address cases of people who have suffered as a result of the political split. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Popular Resistance Committees and its armed wing rejected its exclusion from reconciliation talks on the basis that the group was not a PLO member. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Jamil Mutawar, Vice-Chairman of the Palestinian Environment Quality Authority, said that the US representative at the UN Climate Change Convention in Durban informed the Palestinian delegation that his country would oppose the Palestinian draft resolution calling for financial support for environmental projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces imposed strict security and military measures on Jerusalem, especially the Old City, amidst calls by extremist Jewish groups to invade the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to celebrate Hanukkah. (*Wafa*)

Israeli bulldozers razed and demolished a number of water wells, agricultural sheds and land north of Kafr al-Deek, a town west of Salfit. (*Wafa*)

At the US Department of State daily press briefing, Spokesperson Victoria Nuland [said](#) that the US had declined to join the Security Council statement issued by the EU members of the Council. She said, "It doesn't change the fact that our long-standing policy remains that we don't recognize the legitimacy of the continued Israeli settlements, but we don't think statements in the Security Council are the way to pursue the goal of getting these parties back to the table. The best way to deal with this issue of land, settlement, etc., is for these parties to talk to each other, come up with borders, and then have two States living side by side in agreed borders." (*US Department of State*)

Israel was said to be furious at PA President Abbas for meeting in Turkey with a recently released Palestinian woman sentenced for having lured an Israeli teen to the West Bank in 2001, where he was murdered by Palestinian militants. Her mother insisted that her daughter had never intended for the teen to be killed. (*AP*)

Five female prisoners at Israel's Hasharon jail went on a hunger strike to protest against having been excluded from the latest prisoner exchange deal. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Palestinian resident of the al-Jib village, northwest of Jerusalem, filed a High Court petition demanding that the Israeli State raze a synagogue built on what he claimed was his private land. (*ynetnews*)

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Tawal, in his Christmas message, called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the two-State solution and 1967 borders. Patriarch Tawal commented on the Palestinian request for full UN membership, stressing the Patriarchy's adherence to the Vatican's clear supportive position of the importance of implementing the two-State solution with secure and internationally organized borders. (*Wafa*)

The establishment of a Palestinian museum within the campus of Birzeit University, near Ramallah, moved closer to fruition with five architectural firms from London, Copenhagen, Dublin, Toronto and Amman presenting their initial conceptual and technical submissions. The Welfare Association, a leading Palestinian non-governmental development organization, was expected to make a decision before the end of the year. The construction budget for the first phase would approximately be \$8 million. (*M&H online*)

The Simon Wiesenthal Center had asked UNESCO's Director-General to suspend its sponsorship of the Palestinian children's magazine *Zayzafoon*, saying that the magazine, in an article, applauded Hitler for murdering Jews and, according to Palestinian Media Watch, the educational children's magazine included terms glorifying jihad. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Seven Israeli tanks and several bulldozers briefly crossed a few dozen metres over the border of eastern Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. The brief incursion was accompanied by helicopters flights overhead while gunfire from a military tower was heard in the town of Abasan. No injuries were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The PA issued an ultimatum to the Quartet that it would resume its campaign for recognition if there was no progress in the peace process resumption in the next month. "If nothing happens by 26 January, we are going back to our international campaign for recognition," said senior Palestinian official Sha'ath. (*The Los Angeles Times*)

Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh met with UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry in Amman discussing ways to push the peace process forward and overcome the current impasse. (*Petra News Agency*)

Fatah and Hamas reached a key agreement in Cairo to admit the latter into the PLO. "The reconciliation has taken off. It might take time, but we have started," said Azzam al-Ahmed, head of the Fatah bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council, after the talks. Under the agreement, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Mashaal joined a committee that would prepare for elections of the PLO's parliament in exile – the Palestine National Council.

He would serve alongside PA President Abbas. The election would clear the way for Hamas to become a full member of the PLO. President Abbas also issued a Presidential decree naming the Central Election Commission to oversee preparations for the local elections. The nine-member body would be headed by political independent Hanna Nasser. Israeli Government Spokesman Mark Regev noted that Hamas had reiterated its calls for Israel's destruction at its anniversary celebrations earlier in the month. "No one in the international community should have illusions as to Hamas," Mr. Regev said, adding, "This is a movement that is terrorist to the core. When Abu Mazen [President Abbas] walks toward Hamas, he's walking away from peace". (*AP*)

According to *Israel Army Radio*, Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor said that the settler "price-tag" policy was terrorism, but that Israel did not need an external organization to condemn the attacks. Mr. Meridor's remarks had been triggered by a statement released on 20 December by the four current EU members of the Security Council condemning Israel's recent announcements of building [settlements]. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Defense Minister Barak criticized statements made by the Israeli Foreign Ministry saying that the "bickering" of EU members of the Security Council over Israeli settlements was making them "irrelevant". Mr. Barak told *Israel Radio* that "European countries are very relevant ... and they stand with us in important times." He added that the countries should be told that they were mistaken but that Israel should continue cooperating and refrain from conflicts with them. (*Haaretz*)

According to security sources, the IDF, accompanied by heavy military vehicles, raided the Ethna town, west of Hebron, demolishing farming huts and wells that belonged to the village council and two families. The head of the Ethna village council, Jamal Tumizi, said that Israeli forces had so far demolished two wells, two water tanks and one farming hut in the village. (*Wafa*)

23

Israeli forces shot a Palestinian protester in the leg during a demonstration in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah. Two protesters were arrested while a photographer suffered slight injury from a tear gas canister. An Israeli military spokesman described the protest as a "violent and illegal riot" and said that the injured protester "is known to security forces for his previous involvement in such violence and illegal riots", adding that he had been hurling rocks at security forces before they opened fire. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Reacting to the Fatah-Hamas agreement to include the latter in the PLO, Israel's Transport Minister Israel Katz said that Israel should respond by unilaterally annexing settlements in the West Bank as it had done in Arab East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights. "Israel must impose its sovereignty on all Jewish districts of Judaea and Samaria [the West Bank]," Mr. Katz told *Public Radio*, adding, "Israel must also make preparations to ensure the safety of its citizens in the face of this terrorist organization backed by Iran." (*Al Arabiya News, The Jerusalem Post*)

According to an Israeli Civil Administration document, Israel issued 101 different types of permits to govern the movement of Palestinians, whether within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Israel or abroad. The most common permits were those allowing Palestinians to work in Israel or in settlements in the West Bank. Over the decades, however, the permit regimen had grown into a vast bureaucracy that included permits for worshippers for Friday prayers in Jerusalem, for clerics working at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and for church employees. (*Haaretz*)

According to *Haaretz*, the previous week's opening of a new crossing in East Jerusalem's Shu'fat neighbourhood, coupled with Jerusalem Mayor Barkat's assertions that Israel should relinquish Palestinian neighbourhoods that were beyond the separation barrier, despite the fact that their residents carried Israeli identity cards, and the resumption of work on separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians between Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim", were indications that Israel was erecting, at an enormous expense, a major system of roads and checkpoints that would allow for the total separation of Palestinians and Israelis, while also enabling the construction of "Mevasseret Adumim", a [settlement] that would connect "Ma'aleh Adumim" to Jerusalem. (*Haaretz*)

EU Head of Delegation to Israel Andrew Standley submitted an official document to the Israeli Foreign Ministry stating that the EU was extremely concerned that Israel was demolishing Palestinian homes in an area Israel intended to use for establishing a settlement that would create a chain between Jerusalem and "Ma'aleh Adumim". Mr. Standley demanded explanations on the issue. (*IMEMC*)

Likud Knesset member Ze'ev Elkin criticized a statement attributed to Jerusalem Mayor Barkat according to which Israel should relinquish Jerusalem's Palestinian neighbourhoods beyond the separation barrier, saying that Mr. Barkat was advocating "an injury against the completeness and unity of Jerusalem". (*Haaretz*)

UNESCO said that it was withdrawing funding for the Palestinian youth magazine *Zayzafouna* that published an article suggesting admiration for Hitler. In a [statement](#), the organization said that it was shocked and dismayed, and strongly deplored and condemned the reproduction of such inflammatory statements in a magazine associated with UNESCO's name and mission. (www.unesco.org)

24

Shots were fired around noon at an Israeli vehicle near the "Ma'ale Shomron" settlement. No one was injured in the incident but the vehicle was damaged and there were clear signs that the vehicle had been struck by bullets. IDF soldiers searched the area for the perpetrators and checkpoints had been set up. (*Haaretz*)

The IDF identified vandalism containing racial slurs against Arabs in the Palestinian village of Wadi Dura near the "Beit El" settlement. A toy gun and several rounds of ammunition were also retrieved near the area. The IDF had passed the case on to police investigators. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces closed all entrances to the village of Azzun, east of Qalqilya after storming the village during the early morning hours. The soldiers completely shut down the northern and western entrances, preventing all residents from going in or out, and then ascended to the roof of a local resident's home and started ransacking houses for inspection. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A rocket and a mortar fired from the northern Gaza Strip exploded in open fields in the Hof Ashkelon and Eshkol regional councils. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh met with PA President Abbas and discussed the need for continued coordination and consultation on various developments in the region, and issues of mutual concern, especially peacemaking efforts. (*Jordan News Agency*)

Hundreds of settlers, under the protection of Israeli soldiers and police, marched through the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem, drumming and chanting racist slogans against Arabs and Palestinians. (Wafa)

The Palestinian rights group Stop the Wall, in a [press release](#), urged UN special rapporteurs and diplomatic missions to investigate Israeli-targeted shooting of activists. The complaint had come up following the shooting of a 20-year-old protester in the village of Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah, two weeks after the killing of Mustafa Tamimi in the same village when he was hit directly in the face by a tear gas canister fired by Israeli soldiers.

(Wafa)

Palestinian People's Party member Bassam Salhi said that Palestinian factions had agreed to support further moves to gain full membership at the UN. (Ma'an News Agency)

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Hamas leader Haniyeh's deputy, Mohammed Awwad, announced that Mr. Haniyeh will visit Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, Sudan, Tunisia and Turkey to discuss development projects. He did not say how long the trip would last. (AP)

Israeli Foreign Minister Liberman, in an address before foreign ambassadors and consuls in Jerusalem, reiterated his position that concluding a genuine peace deal with the PA was not possible at the present time. He said that with so much of the region in turmoil, it was not the time to be pushing an ill-advised Israeli-Palestinian peace arrangement: "The only change that would happen here, if we return to 1967 borders, would be that the Qassam and Grad rocket fire will not only come from the Gaza Strip into southern Israeli cities, but also from Qalqilya into central Israel." (Haaretz, Israel Today Magazine)

Pope Benedict XVI called for the resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians in his Urbi et Orbi message. (www.vatican.va)

Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahhar predicted that his organization would win a sweeping victory in the legislative elections due in May and improve on their 2006 election victory, when they won 74 of the available 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Hamas had not yet made a decision about a presidential candidate, he added. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that if Hamas joined the Palestinian Government, Israel would not enter into negotiations with the PA.

"I will not allow a Palestinian State to turn into... Gaza and Lebanon," he said, referring to Hamas and Hezbollah's missile arsenals. (Ynetnews)

A draft law was submitted to the Knesset to declare Jerusalem the unified capital of Israel. (Wafa)

Dozens of extremist settlers rallied on a main road west of Nablus against PA official Daghlis, who was responsible for monitoring settlement activity in the northern West Bank. Some settlers held up pictures of Mr. Daghlis, calling him an "inciter against settlers and settlements". Mr. Daghlis responded that the rally would not stop him from exposing settler crimes "to the whole world". (Ma'an News Agency)

A settler was slightly wounded when stones were thrown at a car she was traveling in near Beit Ummar, in northern Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

A group of settlers attacked the Palestinian Customs Office and Public Safety Commission in Hebron, destroyed their vehicles and battered the staff.

Custom officers monitored and controlled any illegal entrance of settlement products and services to the Palestinian market as part of the PA campaign to keep the Palestinian market free of settlements goods. (Wafa)

Israel began tearing down a section of its separation wall near Bil'in village, four years after Israel's Supreme Court had ordered it torn down, rejecting the military's argument that the route was necessary to secure the nearby "Modi'in Illit" settlement. (MSNBC)

26

Israeli forces opened fire at agricultural land amidst an intensive presence of reconnaissance planes east of the town of Beit Hanoun and also raided the area north-west of the town of Beit Lahia amidst heavy shooting, both in the northern Gaza strip. (Wafa)

A 38-year-old Palestinian resident of the Jabalia refugee camp was killed in an explosion in his house. The military wing of Hamas said that the man was one of its members and died when a bomb exploded by mistake. (Wafa)

The PA and Hamas condemned statements by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in which he threatened not to restart peace talks if Hamas joined the new Palestinian Government. "These statements are totally declined and everyone should realize that priority is given to the national reconciliation," Chief Palestinian Negotiator Erakat said. In Gaza, Hamas official Salah al-Bardawil described Mr. Netanyahu's statements as a blatant interference in Palestinian domestic affairs. (The Guardian Nigeria, Xinhua)

Senior Hamas leader Haniyeh received a warm welcome when he arrived at the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Cairo. Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Badei welcomed Mr. Haniyeh at a joint conference and said that his party was concerned with Palestinian issues. (The Jerusalem Post)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khalid Mashaal said that a unity Government must be formed to end the division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas discussed the results of the recent reconciliation talks held in Cairo with a delegation of Hamas lawmakers and officials. Mr. Abbas expressed satisfaction with the results of the Cairo talks, explaining that the results were the mechanism to implement the reconciliation agreement and end all signs of division. He urged all parties to implement what had been agreed upon and to hold the elections planned for May.

(Wafa)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad condemned Israeli deliberations on a bill submitted to the Knesset declaring Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem, the capital of Israel and the Jewish people. (Wafa)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in a [report](#) said that the estimated number of Palestinians in the world was 11.22 million, of whom 4.23 million were in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 1.37 million in Israel, 4.99 million in Arab countries and around 636,000 in other countries.

(Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, MENA, Khaleej Times)

Groups of Jewish extremists broke into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and roamed its yard under the protection of Israeli police. Senior Jewish rabbis had called on their supporters the previous week to storm the Mosque for the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah to perform religious rituals on the yard.

(Wafa)

According to a report, a total of 3,312 cases of arrests of Palestinians by Israel had been documented in 2011, from which 113 prisoners had been released in the prisoner exchange deal. Abdul Nasser Ferwanah, a researcher specializing in prisoners' affairs, said that the cases included all segments of the Palestinian community in different age groups, and was not limited to males but also women, the sick and the disabled, as well as lawmakers and political leaders. (Wafa)

27

An 18-year-old Palestinian was caught in possession of two pipe bombs, a Molotov cocktail and other munitions in the West Bank. The suspect had

been turned over for questioning to security forces. (*Ynetnews*)

The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees said in a statement that Israeli forces had crossed the border in the central Gaza Strip.

The group said that it clashed with the soldiers and a 13-year-old boy was injured by Israeli gunfire. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian officials say that a militant riding on a motorcycle was killed in an Israeli air strike in Gaza, and five Hamas officers were injured in a second attack that hit a police car a few hours later. (*AP*)

Relatives of Palestinian terrorists who had been killed in the conflict would not be allowed to participate in gatherings with bereaved Israeli families who had lost their loved ones in terror attacks, Israeli Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar announced. The meetings, organized by the Parents Circle-Families Forum – an organization that promoted reconciliation between bereaved Palestinians and Israelis – had been halted after parents of students in Kfar Saba complained to the Education Ministry. (*Ynetnews*)

OIC Secretary-General Ihsanoglu strongly [condemned](#) the proposed Israeli bill on the declaration of the occupied city of Al-Quds “a capital of Israel and of the Jewish people”, regarding it as a direct aggression against the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights. (www.oic-oci.org)

PLO Executive Committee member Ashrawi said that prosecuting Israel was the first step in response to Israel's racist projects, including announcing Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people and escalating settlement activities. She added that withdrawing PLO recognition of Israel would be the last option in case all other possible means failed. (*Wafa*)

PA Foreign Minister Malki said that the Quartet was close to failing in bringing Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table. He added that other nations should join the mediation efforts, the likes of Brazil, China, India, Turkey and other Western countries. Mr. Malki noted that the PA was considering applying to the General Assembly as a non-member State, thus making it easier for the PA to join other international bodies, including the International Court of Justice. (*Ynetnews*)

"There will be no escape from conducting a significant operation [in Gaza]," Chief of IDF General Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz said according to a [statement](#) on the IDF website. Speaking on the third anniversary of “Operation Cast Lead”, Lt.-Gen. Gantz "expressed satisfaction with the high level of deterrence Israel gained from [the operation]." (*The Jerusalem Post, Israel Defense Forces*)

Hamas marked the three-year anniversary of Israel's “Operation Cast Lead” saying that Israeli threats to launch another large-scale operation in Gaza were nothing more than “psychological warfare and propaganda”. Hamas Spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri, at a press conference, referred to Israeli war crimes and genocide in the Gaza Strip, calling on the international community to “deal with the occupation as a terrorist entity, the most dangerous in the world.” (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Hamas authorities decided to ban Fatah's forty-seventh anniversary celebrations in the Gaza Strip, Fatah spokesman Fayez Abu Eitah said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Fatah senior official Sha'ath said that if “Israel doesn't freeze settlement and will continue to oppose negotiations on 1967 lines, we shall resume the international campaign for independence” as of 26 January. (*AFP, Ynetnews*)

Hamas was joining the PLO not as a result of a change in its ideology but because it wanted the PLO to stick to its original platform – liberating Palestine and achieving the right of return for Palestine refugees, Hamas leaders explained. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were demanding that the PLO reconsider its political strategy by scrapping the Oslo Accords and its recognition of the two-State solution. Senior Hamas leader Osama Hamdan said that Hamas would become part of the peace process with Israel. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Hamas leader Haniyeh, upon his arrival at Khartoum, said that Jerusalem would remain “Arab and Muslim”. The purpose of Mr. Haniyeh's visit to Sudan was reportedly to participate in the “Jerusalem Forum” and advocate for the resistance to the “Judaization of Jerusalem” by Israel. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The PA announced plans for the construction of an international airport near Jerusalem and a port in the Gaza Strip. The sea port would be built in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinian Minister of Transport Sa'di Al-Krunz said that France and the Netherlands had agreed to finance the project. (*World Maritime News*)

A hard-line Israeli group said that it was launching plans for a new tourist centre at the site of a politically sensitive archaeological dig in a largely Arab neighbourhood outside Jerusalem's Old City, drawing fire from Palestinian officials. The project's sponsor, the Elad Foundation, said that the new centre and parking garage would be built above a section of an excavation area known as the City of David, leaving the ruins below accessible. (*AP, Yahoo News*)

Israel's military prosecution opposed Prime Minister Netanyahu's plan to try violent right-wing settlers in military tribunals, partly because it would not be an effective way of convicting Jewish extremists and partly because it would further politicize the army. (*Haaretz*)

A group of settlers entered Joseph's Tomb, located east of Nablus, and performed prayers and rituals under tight security provided by Israeli soldiers.

Simultaneously, Israeli forces raided the eastern area of Nablus, firing acoustic bombs and searching several Palestinian houses. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces stormed Al Tour, south of Nablus, and tightened its procedures at checkpoints stationed in the area after a number of settlers broke into a building under construction. (*Wafa*)

During the traditional Christmas Eve midnight mass at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, Fouad Twal, head of the Catholic Church in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, called for bringing down the walls separating people in the region. “History teaches us that the will of the people, with their aspirations to peace and freedom, is stronger than the power of injustice,” said Patriarch Twal in his sermon during the Mass attended by PA President Abbas and Jordanian Foreign Minister Judeh. (*DPA, Trend.az*)

A Palestinian man from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan had been sentenced to four years in prison and ordered to pay restitution for throwing stones at an Israeli car, slightly injuring the driver's daughter, judicial sources said. (*AFP*)

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The Ayman Judah unit of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said in a statement that the rocket that had been fired from the Gaza Strip the previous day was in retaliation for the death of Abdullah Telbani, killed earlier by an Israeli air strike. It had landed in an open area and no injuries had been reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli navy boat reportedly rammed into *Olivia*, an international boat monitoring human rights in the Gaza waters, which had not crossed the three-nautical-mile fishing grounds defined in international agreements. An international activist aboard the boat was injured. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces launched an artillery shell which landed in an open area in the north of Gaza. An Israeli army spokesman said that he was not familiar with the incident. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Four rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel, with two landing in open areas in the Eshkol region and another landing in the Sha'ar Hanegev region without exploding. No injuries or damage was reported. The strike followed a targeted killing by the Israeli Air Force of three militants and wounding another nine the day earlier. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli police arrested six Jewish extremists on suspicion of attacking an army base in the northern West Bank earlier during the month, a spokeswoman said. Two of them were residents of “Karnei Shomron” settlement, while the other four – one of whom was a minor – were from Jerusalem. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces detained a journalist from his Nablus home, one of at least 17 Palestinians seized in overnight raids across the West Bank. *Israel Radio* reported that the arrestees were “wanted” Hamas members. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

Palestinian National Council (PNC) head Bilal Al Shakhshir announced that a committee responsible for PNC elections will begin its work on 15 January 2012. Hamas and Islamic Jihad had reportedly agreed to participate in the committee, which was considered as a sign that both movements would also join the council itself. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A top Israeli official reportedly said that the Palestinian leadership two weeks ago submitted to the Quartet a proposal to renew peace talks with Israel that eased Palestinian conditions and dropped the demand for West Bank settlement construction freeze on condition that Israel released 100 prisoners as a show of good will. The prisoners in question were veteran inmates, incarcerated in Israeli prisons since before the Oslo Accords. (*Haaretz*)

An opinion poll conducted jointly by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research showed that 58 per cent of Israelis and 50 per cent of Palestinians supported a permanent settlement package along the Clinton parameters. About two thirds on both sides did not believe it was possible to reach a final status settlement at the present time. Seventy-eight per cent of Palestinians supported President Abbas' conditions for returning to negotiations, while 69 per cent of Israelis thought that Israel should not accept these conditions. (www.pcpsr.org)

The international community, especially the UN and its [Secretary-General], and the Quartet must uphold their responsibility to lift the unfair siege on the Gaza Strip, the Arab League said in a statement. (*Xinhua*)

The US Congress released a little more than 20 per cent of \$187 million in US assistance to the Palestinians that had been frozen over the Palestinian bid for UN membership. The US Agency for International Development would disburse \$40 million which was to be used for strengthening the foundations necessary for a future Palestinian State. (*CBS News*)

Israeli forces and municipality officials raided a number of Palestinian homes in Silwan to deliver warrants for their demolition, locals said. (*Ma'an News Agency, WAFA*)

Israeli forces demolished a Palestinian house and two animal barns in Jenin, and razed agricultural land and a water well in Hebron, according to local sources. (*WAFA*)

Israeli forces closed the main entrance of Susiya School, in the Hebron area, trapping the teachers and students inside, according to an activist.

Israeli authorities had demolished the school the previous year, and delivered new demolition orders the previous month. (*WAFA*)

Israeli authorities approved the construction of 130 new settler homes in East Jerusalem. The Jerusalem municipality approved the building of three 12-story tower blocks in Gilo and a large tourist complex in Silwan. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Presidency Spokesman Abu Rudeineh condemned the Jerusalem municipality's decision to build 130 new housing units in the East Jerusalem. (*WAFA*)

An Israeli court extended the detention of two Hamas lawmakers from the West Bank for six more months, their parliamentary bloc said. Israel had detained 22 Palestinian lawmakers, 19 of them from Hamas. (*Xinhua*)

On the third anniversary of Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip, the Addameer group reiterated its condemnation of the Israeli policy that had denied 443 Gazans detained in Israeli prisons family visits for over four years. (*IMEMC*)

Israel's High Court of Justice had authorized Israel to exploit the West Bank's natural resources for its own economic needs by rejecting a petition brought by the Yesh Din group against the operation of Israeli-owned quarries in the territory. The court adopted the State's position: that no new Israeli-owned quarries should be established in the West Bank, but existing ones should be allowed to continue. (*Haaretz*)

Speaking on the third anniversary of the “Operation Cast Lead”, UNRWA Spokesman in Gaza Adnan Abu Hasna told the *Voice of Palestine* radio that Israel was legally and morally responsible to rebuild Gaza. The ongoing Israeli blockade hindered any possibility to rebuild it, while Palestinians, particularly children, still suffered from the emotional aftermath of the Israeli attack, he said. (*WAFA*)

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Israeli war planes bombed central and northern Gaza, flattening a training compound of the Al-Quds Brigades, Islamic Jihad's armed wing. No injuries had been reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A shepherd sustained facial injuries when Israeli soldiers threw sound grenades at him during clashes near Hebron, a local official said. Israeli forces raided Beit Ummar and briefly detained and attacked several locals, Popular Committee Spokesman Muhammad Awad said. An Israeli military spokeswoman had no immediate comment on the incident. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli security forces arrested several Jewish activists in a West Bank settlement on suspicion of monitoring the movements of Israeli soldiers in the area. Because of lack of material evidence against the settlers, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu approved issuing an administrative detention order against them, rejecting, however, a recommendation to label them as a “terror group”. (*Haaretz, IMEMC*)

Hamas pulled out many of its lower and mid-level staff from its Damascus headquarters and made contingency plans to move its leadership to locations across the Middle East. (*AP*)

Israeli settlers attacked schoolchildren at the Hebron city centre, witnesses said. Locals said that settlers tried to stab Mustafa al-Qadi, a sixth-grade student and hit his friend who tried to defend him under the watch of IDF troops who did not intervene. Director of the Education Ministry's Office in Hebron Nisreen Amr condemned settlers' racist attacks and called for international protection for students and teachers in the city. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

At a joint press conference with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Maxwell Gaylard, the head of the Palestinian Bureau on the Apartheid Wall and Settlements Affairs, Maher Ghneim, said that 118 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces and 535 buildings had been demolished in 2011. Mr. Ghneim added that the escalation in settler violence fell within the framework of Israeli policy of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian State while continuing to claim new land and natural resources. Mr. Gaylard said that settlement activities and the apartheid wall in the West Bank, and all assaults targeting Palestinians were illegal. (*WAFA*)

Israeli forces handed a Palestinian farmer south of Bethlehem a notice that two dunums of his land would be taken over and annexed to a closed military area, reportedly required for further construction of the separation wall. (*WAFA*)

According to Physicians for Human Rights, Palestinian patients and business people who needed to leave Gaza were being asked to collaborate with Israel in exchange for exit permits. The Israeli internal intelligence agency had called 172 people, mostly men, aged 18 to 40, for interrogation during last month, giving exit permits for some. (*The Guardian*)

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At least one Palestinian was killed and five others were injured by an Israeli air strike east of Gaza City, Palestinian medical officials said. In a statement, the Israeli army said that its aircraft had attacked the besieged strip, adding that the operation was aimed at "a terrorist squad that was identified moments before firing rockets". (*Aljazeera.com*)

The Minister for the Middle East of the United Kingdom, Alistair Burt condemned the decision by the Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Committee to build additional structures in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, and housing in the settlement of Gilo. "This is another provocative and deeply counterproductive step, the latest in a series by the Israeli authorities. Continued systematic settlement construction makes it ever harder to achieve the common goal of international efforts: a contiguous Palestinian State living side-by-side with a secure Israel, with Jerusalem as a shared capital." (www.fco.co.uk)

Speaking to *Gulf News*, Tayseer Khalid, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, said that the Palestinian factions would accelerate the implementation of the Palestinian national reconciliation deal by putting a unified political programme in place to face Israel's aggressive policies. He added that the new unified Palestinian strategy would be based on popular resistance that would cover the entire West Bank territories. "The popular resistance will reshape the Palestinian relationship with Israel... to reach total disengagement with Israel," he said, adding, "We will never accept to be an agent for the Israeli occupation." Mr. Khalid also termed as "nonsense" a report published in *Haaretz* on 28 December that the Palestinian leadership submitted an offer to the Quartet highlighting its readiness to resume peace talks without a freeze on settlements in exchange for the release of 100 Palestinian prisoners only. (*Gulfnews.com*)

Hamas was considering not putting a candidate for the PA presidential election, which was expected to take place in May 2012, at the same time as elections for the Palestinian Parliament and the PLO's Palestine National Council. Hamas sources said that no decision had yet been made by the organization's leadership, but most senior Hamas officials leaned toward foregoing the presidential ballot and running only in the parliamentary elections. (*Haaretz.com*)

Hamas leader Haniyeh, who was on a visit to Khartoum to attend the Al-Quds Forum, held talks with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in the presence of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Mashaal and other key Hamas figures, including Mahmoud Zahar and Mussa Abu Marzuk. "From the Arabs and Islamic countries, we want finance and political support to confirm that Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian State," Mr. Haniyeh told reporters after the meeting. (*AFP*)

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights released its second [factsheet](#) entitled "Access to Education in the Gaza Strip". The report found that Gazan children's access to education had been routinely violated due to the ongoing military activities and occupation of the Gaza Strip. The factsheet was part of a Save the Children UK-funded project entitled "Child Rights at the Centre: Enhancing National Capacities to Monitor, Document, and Report on Child Rights Issues in the OPT". (www.mezan.org)

Approximately 200 armed settlers broke into archaeological areas in Al Khadr, south of Bethlehem. Dozens of Israeli soldiers were at the scene to provide protection to the settlers. (*IMEMC*)

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Palestinian medical sources reported that a 32-year-old Palestinian man had been shot and wounded in the leg by Israeli military fire in the northern Gaza Strip. (*IMEMC*)

The PA said in a statement: "In light of the escalation in the settlement campaign, the Palestinian leadership has decided to ask the Security Council to discuss this critical development which threatens to destroy the peace process and the two-State solution." (*DPA*)

The Israeli Government announced that it would recognize the "Ramat Gilad" outpost established on the private land of Palestinians from Kafr village in the West Bank, which would be relocated and would become part of the "Karnei Shomron" settlement. (*IMEMC, Ynetnews*)
