

Division for Palestinian Rights

*Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
Question of Palestine*

Monthly media monitoring review

March 2013

Monthly highlights

- Labour unions of France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and Sweden agree to boycott products from Israeli settlements ([5 March](#))
- Swedish Parliament upgrades status of PA Mission to that of an embassy ([6 March](#))
- UNICEF reports pattern of ill-treatment of children arrested by Israeli authorities ([6 March](#))
- World Bank report to AHLC explores damage to the competitiveness of the Palestinian economy caused by worsening fiscal situation and Israeli restrictions ([12 March](#))
- European Parliament adopts resolution calling on the Israeli authorities to open investigation into Palestinian prisoner's death ([14 March](#))
- PA President Abbas meets with Russian Federation President Putin ([14 March](#))
- Israeli political leaders sign agreements to form a new coalition Government ([15 March](#))
- Israel's incoming Minister of Housing announces that new Cabinet would keep expanding settlements ([17 March](#))
- AHLC calls on donors to continue providing predictable assistance to the PA ([19 March](#))
- President Obama visits Israel and the Palestinian territories ([20 March](#))
- US unblocks almost \$500 million in aid to the PA frozen by the Congress ([22 March](#))
- Prime Minister Netanyahu apologizes to Turkey for 2010 raid on Gaza-bound flotilla and offers compensation ([22 March](#))

I

Three Palestinian farmers were injured when an unidentified object exploded east of the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. An Israeli army spokesman said that there had been no Israeli military activity in the area. (*Ma'an News Agency, Palestine News Network*)

Palestinians in Gaza, near the border fence with Israel, fired in the direction of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, the IDF Spokesman's Office stated. Israeli and Palestinian sources stated that three Palestinians were hit by IDF fire. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

A series of clashes broke out between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the West Bank, the IDF said. Over 400 Palestinians were protesting in several areas that included Hebron, Nabi Saleh, Beitunia and Kaddum. Five Palestinians, including a medic and a journalist, were injured in Bil'in during a demonstration against the wall. Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who had addressed the crowd, was evacuated after tear gas was fired at stone throwers. (*Ma'an News Agency, Palestine News Network, Ynetnews*)

IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz played down the probability of Palestinian protests escalating into a third intifada. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians in raids across the West Bank. Two from Qibya village near Ramallah were detained, one from Ramallah, and one from Tuqu village east of Bethlehem, an army spokeswoman said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Kerem Shalom crossing remained closed since a rocket was fired from Gaza on 25 February. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to a senior Israeli official, US President Barack Obama will postpone his planned visit to Israel until after Passover on 2 April if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was not able to form a coalition by 16 March. (*Haaretz*)

Settlement construction would be suspended until after President Obama's visit to Israel. According to instructions provided by Prime Minister Netanyahu's office to the Ministries of Defense and Housing, no new tenders for housing would be issued in the coming weeks. Similarly, projects whose planning had been completed would not be carried out, and all other bureaucratic steps involved in the public tenders would be postponed. (*Ma'ariv*)

Settlers threw rocks and damaged a number of Palestinian cars along a street near the "Yizhar" settlement south of Nablus, a Palestinian official said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, Qadura Fares, had demanded an external investigation into the death of Arafat Jaradat that would be impartial and whose conclusions would be accepted by both sides. (*Haaretz*)

An Israeli forensic team had determined that the bruises on Jaradat's body had been the result of resuscitation and not of abuse or torture. The Israeli Health Ministry said in a statement that "There were no significant changes due to illness in other organs indicating the cause of death; therefore, further tests are needed".

(Xinhua)

A group of 50 to 60 Palestinians protested the holding of the International Jerusalem Marathon. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had called for a boycott of the marathon because a segment of the route would cross through annexed East Jerusalem. (The Daily Star)

The Spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, in a [note](#) to correspondents on comments attributed to Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, during the Fifth Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Vienna: "If the comment about Zionism was interpreted correctly, then it was not only wrong but contradicts the very principles on which the Alliance of Civilizations is based." (www.un.org)

2

Israeli forces arrested five Palestinians from across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including a 13-year-old boy, according to local and Palestinian security sources. (Wafa)

Israeli forces fired tear gas at a Nablus rally commemorating the forty-fourth anniversary of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. A number of people suffered tear gas inhalation and two teenagers were arrested by Israeli forces, witnesses said. An Israeli spokeswoman said, "Fifty Palestinians ... threw rocks at security forces who responded with riot dispersal means." (Ma'an News Agency)

An Israeli army spokeswoman said that 4 Palestinians were arrested, 2 in Arroub camp, 1 in Nablus and 1 in Ramallah. (Ma'an News Agency)

A group of settlers accompanied by soldiers performed religious rituals in an evacuated settlement near Jenin, locals said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The PA Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs stated in a report: "[Jaradat] was tortured savagely and was put under psychological pressure on suspicion that he threw stones at Israeli troops. ... Because he did not confess to throwing stones, Jaradat was moved to the collaborators' cell in prison, where he was physically liquidated two days later," the Ministry said. (Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post)

Three Palestinian prisoners in Israel's Ofer jail had gone on hunger strike, a PA lawyer said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Fatah's Youth Movement organized a bike rally in the West Bank to protest the Jerusalem marathon held the previous day that passed through occupied East Jerusalem. Over 100 people joined the rally. (Ma'an News Agency)

3

Local sources said that Israeli soldiers had attacked and severely beaten two Palestinians near Jalba village, south of Hebron. (Wafa)

Palestinian medical sources reported that a Palestinian had been injured during clashes with Israeli soldiers in Ein Yabroud village, near Ramallah. Ma'an News Agency reported that a Molotov cocktail was hurled at a military jeep setting it on fire. No injuries were reported. (IMEMC)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians was virtually impossible. Speaking at the conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, D.C., he recommended reaching an interim deal that would safeguard Israel's security and, failing that, he said that Israel should take unilateral steps. (Ynetnews)

In a statement, the PA Cabinet affirmed that the 2013 budget draft law would be completed before the end of March. The statement said that Prime Minister Fayyad also discussed and accepted the resignation of Minister of Finance Nabil Qassis. The Cabinet welcomed the report by the European Union Heads of Missions on settlements. Mr. Qassis told reporters that the 2013 budget deficit was expected to reach \$1.4 billion and he decided to step down after politicians and labour unions objected to a number of proposed austerity measures. (AP, Palestine News Network)

The PA Ministry of Education would punish teachers who had staged a strike without the approval of their union, the Ministry said. Some 4,000 teachers would not be paid for the days they had been absent. (Ma'an News Agency)

The meddling by Hamas officials on the Kerem Shalom crossing may lead to its closure, a PA West Bank official said on condition of anonymity. Hamas planned to replace the Palestinian transport company receiving goods through the crossing, the official said. Ziad Al-Zaza of Hamas said, "This work should not be monopolized by one company." (Xinhua)

Israeli settlers from "Elon Moreh" begun building a settlement outpost of about 10 houses on Palestinian land east of Nablus, said PA settlement affairs official Ghassan Daghlis. (Palestine News Network)

Israeli authorities extended for the seventh time a ban forbidding Sheikh Najeh Bkerat, the manager of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, from entering the Mosque, the Sheikh said. (Ma'an News Agency)

The League of Arab States strongly condemned an incident in which an Israeli officer had kicked a copy of the Koran and assaulted a number of women who had been in the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. (Wafa)

The Dura municipality, in cooperation with the Fatah movement in Hebron, organized a mass rally in solidarity with prisoners on hunger strike, and also condemned Arafat Jaradat's killing. (Wafa)

An Israeli military court extended the administrative detention of Issa Al-Jabari, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Committee from Hamas, by one month, the prisoners' rights group Addameer said. He had been arrested in May 2011. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel released a 41-year-old Palestinian from Hebron after having detained him since October 2009 without charge or trial, a prisoners' group said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called on Palestinians to continue the "prisoners' intifada" in support of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. (Ma'an News Agency)

4

According to a statement released by Shin Bet, Israeli security forces seized a Hamas cell in Hebron that "planned to carry out various terror attacks." (xinhuanet.com)

Shin Bet released data showing a 70 per cent increase in attacks by Palestinians in February compared to January, with the vast majority of the 139 incidents occurring in the West Bank and Jerusalem, mostly in the form of firebombing. (Haaretz, www.shabak.gov.il)

Palestinians medical sources reported that several Palestinians had been treated for the effects of tear gas inhalation after Israeli soldiers entered Al-Khadr town, south of Bethlehem, and clashed with local youths. (IMEMC)

Two buses belonging to the Israeli company Afikim were torched south of Qalqilya a day after the bus operator had begun two "Palestinians-only" lines in the West Bank. (The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

Jerusalem police arrested three Israeli girls in connection with an attack against an Arab woman the previous week. (Ynetnews)

Israeli forces arrested two young Palestinians in Bethlehem and Jenin. (Palestine News Network)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas discussed with US Secretary of State John Kerry in Riyadh the latest developments in the peace process. According to Palestinian sources, President Abbas also requested that the Obama Administration exert pressure on the Israeli Government to release scores of Palestinian prisoners and freeze construction in the settlements. (The Jerusalem Post, Palestine News Network, Wafa)

Addressing the AIPAC conference in Washington, D.C., US Vice-President Joe Biden stated that "It takes two to tango", noting that Washington remained "deeply engaged" in the peace process, but that "The Arab world has to get in the game. There are those who question whether the goal can be reached, but we make no apologies for pursuing that goal." (The Jerusalem Post)

US President Obama demanded a timetable for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and a detailed plan from Prime Minister Netanyahu during his upcoming visit to Israel, according to Israeli sources. "Obama has made it clear to Netanyahu that his visit is not about photo-ops, but the business of Iran and a Palestinian State," a source said. (Ynetnews)

Philip Gordon had been appointed Special Assistant to the US President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf Region, the White House said. Mr. Gordon had been a member of President Obama's foreign policy team for four years and had formulated US policy on Libya, Syria and Iran. (The Jerusalem Post)

"Last week, Netanyahu travelled to Jordan and met King Abdullah II," a diplomatic source said on condition of anonymity. "In the meeting, they discussed the Middle East peace process." (AFP)

"Over 70 trucks ... are currently waiting on the Israeli side of the Kerem Shalom crossing," an Israeli Defense Ministry statement said. "The Palestinian contractor ... decided not to open the crossing today," it added, owing to "attempts by Hamas to replace the current contractor with one of their choosing... Israel cannot allow the operation of the crossing under such circumstances given the security risks." Palestinian sources said that Hamas was seeking to impose new duties on the import of goods into Gaza owing to falling income from tunnels shut down by Egypt. Hamas said that the problem was because of Israel's refusal to lower its

fees for the use of the crossing. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post)

The Government of Japan would donate \$10 million to the PA budget, a statement by its Representative Office in Ramallah said. (Wafa)

Israel launched two "Palestinians-only" bus lines in the West Bank for workers going to Israel, a step the Israeli rights group B'Tselem described as racist and which the Transport Ministry called an improvement in service. (Ynetnews)

Jordanian Minister for Islamic Affairs, Abdul Salam Abbad, condemned the Israeli soldier who had kicked and stepped on a copy of the Koran in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, calling it as stark violation against the Holy Quran. (xinhuanet.com)

IDF courts in the West Bank cancel just 2.6 per cent of administrative detention orders, according to a report covering 2009 to 2011 obtained by Haaretz. The High Court of Justice had never accepted a single Palestinian's petition against such an order. (Haaretz)

PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Issa Qaraqe stated that the Palestinian detainees in the Galboa Israeli prison were holding a one-day hunger strike, as an initial step in support of hunger striking detainees and to protest Israeli violations. (IMEMC)

According to police, 56 "price-tag" attacks, including the slashing of tires and spray-painting hate slogans, had been committed in Jerusalem against the local Arab population. (Ynetnews)

Likud-Beitenu Knesset member Moshe Feiglin was denied entry by police to a mosque on [Al-Haram Al-Sharif] that was closed to tourists. As a result, the area was closed to visitors. (The Jerusalem Post)

Dozens of the Islamic Movement supporters demonstrated outside the US Embassy in Tel Aviv and called on President Obama to avoid entering the Temple Mount with an Israeli escort. (Ynetnews)

The mother of Bassem Abu Rahma, a 30-year-old Palestinian who was killed after being hit by a tear gas canister while demonstrating against the wall in Bil'in in 2009, had filed an appeal with Israel's High Court of Justice requesting a decision on whether to indict the soldiers involved in her son's death. (Haaretz)

The Jerusalem Magistrate Court conditionally released three Jewish teenagers involved in an altercation with a Palestinian woman the previous week. A restraining order would prohibit them from entering Jerusalem for the following month. (Palestine News Network)

Israeli police arrested a man suspected of a so-called "price-tag" operation outside the West Bank settlement of "Shiloh", by spraying anti-Arab graffiti on Palestinian cars. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Palestinian Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs reported that Israeli soldiers stormed two sections of the Ramon Israeli prison where at least 850 Palestinian detainees were being held. (IMEMC)

Venke Aarethun, a Norwegian human rights activist, had been awarded an honorary Palestinian citizenship at the Presidential Compound in Ramallah. The award, granted by President Abbas, honoured Ms. Aarethun who had dedicated her life to the Palestinian cause and people. (Palestine News Network)

The left-wing Jewish Voice for Peace and the Avaaz Global Advocacy Group posted hundreds of billboards proclaiming "AIPAC does not speak for me" across downtown Washington, D.C, where AIPAC was having its annual conference. (Haaretz)

5

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians from the Hebron province after raiding their houses. At least five more Palestinians were arrested in separate operations across the West Bank. (Palestine News Network, Petra)

According to Israeli Government sources, Prime Minister Netanyahu was considering transferring parts of the West Bank to the PA as a gesture of goodwill ahead of the planned visit of President Obama. (Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews, xinhuanet.com)

The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, said that the time was ripe for a "reset" in the Quartet's activity. He said that following President Obama's re-election, a good chance had emerged to resume the Quartet's work. (The Voice of Russia)

Turkey's Consul General in Jerusalem had been appointed Ambassador to the State of Palestine. (Ma'an News Agency)

Raed Fattouh, the Palestinian liaison officer at the Kerem Shalom crossing, said that goods had started flowing into the Gaza Strip after Israel reopened the Strip's only commercial crossing. (xinhuanet.com)

The Palestinian Cabinet decided to form a committee to prepare applications to register sites on the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In January, Palestinian experts finalized Palestine's 2013 submission to the World Heritage Committee, proposing the ancient Bethlehem village of Battir as a heritage site. (Ma'an News Agency)

The General Secretary of the Palestinian Ministerial Council in Gaza, Abdul-Salam Syam, said that Malaysia had agreed to a \$6 million grant for reconstruction projects in Gaza. (Middle East Monitor)

The World Health Organization-OPT released a [report](#) detailing the difficulties encountered by thousands of Palestinian patients in obtaining Israeli permits to access specialized health care in East Jerusalem, Jordan and Israel. (www.reliefnet.int)

A Palestinian had been forced to demolish his own home in Jerusalem's Old City to avoid steep fines that would be imposed on him in the event the Municipality demolished the home. (IMEMC)

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli settlers from the "Bat Ayin" settlement, west of Bethlehem, cut 60 olive trees that belonged to a Palestinian farmer. (Wafa)

The Prisoners Studies Centre in Gaza said Israel had rearrested 15 Palestinians released in the October 2011 prisoner exchange deal with Hamas. (Ma'an News Agency)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) cancelled the 2013 Gaza marathon, blaming the refusal of Hamas to allow women to run. (BBC, The Jerusalem Post, UNRWA)

Labour Unions of France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and Sweden signed an agreement to boycott products from Israeli settlements, including telecommunication services. The agreement was signed following a conference organized by the Association France Palestine Solidarity in Paris. (Palestine News Network, Wafa)

Palestinian students prevented UK Consul-General in Jerusalem, Sir Vincent Fean, from delivering a speech at Birzeit University in Ramallah. According to a student leader, they were protesting London's pro-Israeli policies. (The Daily Star, xinhuanet.com)

6

Israel Radio reported that the Israeli Government had announced plans to hand the Palestinian Authority 700 firearms ahead of US President Obama's upcoming visit, in a bid to enhance its control over cities in the West Bank. (Middle East Monitor)

Israeli soldiers arrested 19 Palestinians during raids in the West Bank, including children. (IMEMC)

An Israeli military court had given a two-year prison sentence to a 16-year-old Palestinian and an 18-month sentence to a 17-year-old. (Middle East Monitor)

Palestinian activists of the Action Group of Palestinians in Syria issued a press release stating that 1,036 Palestinian refugees had been killed in Syria since the start of the conflict in March 2011. (IMEMC)

The Swedish Parliament had voted by an overwhelming majority to upgrade the status of the Palestinian Authority Mission to that of an embassy. (AFP)

At a press encounter, Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians (AHLIC) Barth Eide said that the political deadlock in the Middle East had been causing "fatigue" among financial backers of a future Palestinian State. The Committee will meet in Brussels on 19 March against a backdrop of budget difficulties aggravated by non-payment of aid pledged by global donors, mainly the United States and Arab nations. However, Mr. Eide said that there had also been developments that were favourable such as a possible new Israeli Government without any ultra-Orthodox parties, and the possibility of greater US involvement in the Middle East after the re-election of President Obama. (Global Post)

The Representative Office of Japan to the Palestinian Authority [said](#) that a project to empower youth in Palestine would be launched in March based on the \$707,000 support to the United Nations Population Fund by Government of Japan. (www.ps.emb-japan.go.jp)

The Al-Aqsa Association for Waqf and Heritage said in a statement that Israeli settlers and soldiers entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque, assaulting several Palestinian worshippers after clashes had erupted at the courtyards. (Palestine News Network)

During a visit to Brussels, Israel's President Shimon Peres rejected European Union President Herman Van Rompuy's remarks that there would be no sustainable peace until Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, and those of Israel for security, were fulfilled by a comprehensive deal based on the two-State solution. Mr. Van Rompuy added, "For these reasons I have recalled the opposition of the European Union to the illegal expansion of settlements". Mr. Peres

said that an acceptable solution to the settlement issue had been found years ago, based on a land swap deal. He rejected the notion that because of settlements, the chance of implementing the two-State solution had been lost. Mr. Peres said, "The most important difficulty is not settlements, but terror". (*Haaretz*)

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a report entitled "[Children in Israeli military detention: observation and recommendations](#)" in which the Agency recommended measures so that Palestinian children in Israeli military custody are treated in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards. Based on an analysis of the legal framework and testimonies from children on the violations of their rights in detention, the paper said that there appeared to be a pattern of ill-treatment during the arrest, transfer and interrogation of child detainees. The paper also recommended that, except in extreme circumstances, children should not be arrested at night and a lawyer or family member should be present during interrogation of child suspects. ([www.unicef.org](#))

In a communiqué, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) denounced the inhuman treatment of Palestinian children detained by Israel as exposed by a report by UNICEF. Israel's racial treatment blatantly violated the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ISESCO called upon UNESCO and UNICEF to pressure the Israeli Government to abide by international agreements and to immediately free the 7,000 Palestinian children detained in its prisons. ([www.isesco.org.ma](#))

The Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands had issued a directive to all retail chains in the country to state the origin of products from West Bank settlements, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. "The decision was made after consulting the European Commission," the document stated. The directive made the Netherlands the second country in the EU, after Britain, to recommend such labelling. (*Haaretz*)

A group of youth volunteers in Gaza had launched a radio station on Facebook, The Facebook Voice from Gaza, broadcasting to the world in five languages. The radio shows tackle issues from refugees to prisoners and the Diaspora. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

7

Muhammad Asfour, a 22-year-old Palestinian, had died of a head injury after having been shot with a rubber bullet by IDF soldiers the previous month, a Popular Struggle Coordination Committee spokeswoman said. Mr. Asfour was shot while protesting in his village of Aboud in support of Palestinian prisoners. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli soldiers at the new checkpoint Israeli forces had installed at the entrance to Yamun, west of Jenin. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli National Police Commissioner Inspector General Yochanan Danino said that racially-motivated attacks on Arabs by Israeli Jews were criminal, despicable and must be eradicated. He said that police had arrested suspects in such attacks "and they will face our investigation and the full severity of the law. This is our answer to all of these examples of racism and this is the way we must work to eradicate them." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The IDF detained Miqdad Arqam Ahmaro, 17, and Majd Banan Ahmaro, 18, two Palestinians from Hebron after searching their houses, locals said. An army spokeswoman confirmed the arrests and added that three others were detained in separate raids on Beit Fajjar, south-west of Bethlehem, and the Ramallah-area villages of Beit Ur Al-Tahta and Beit Sira. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

US President Obama hosted leaders of major American Jewish organizations at the White House ahead of his first Presidential visit to Israel later during the month. President Obama told the gathering that the near-term prospects for peace were bleak and that his intention was not to deliver a "grand peace plan", according to a person who attended the event. But he added that that does not preclude him from launching a peace effort in the coming months, and that peace with the Palestinians was the only way for Israel to achieve long-term security. The White House had not publicly announced the dates for the President's trip, though Israeli news media had reported that he would arrive on 20 March, and will also make stops in Ramallah and Jordan. (*AP, Reuters*)

Israeli soldiers accompanied by armoured military vehicles, including a bulldozer, entered 200 metres onto a land belonging to residents in al-Qarara town, east of Khan Yunis, razing Palestinian farmlands. (*IMEMC*)

The website of the President of the Russian Federation published a [statement](#) saying that President Vladimir Putin will meet with PA President Abbas during his visit to Moscow on 14 March. ([eng.news.kremlin.ru](#))

Daniel Pipes, head of the right-wing organization Middle East Forum based in Philadelphia, met, along with other Jewish groups, with the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, Ron Prosor, in New York requesting to pressure the UN to revoke the internationally-recognized right of return of Palestine refugees.

Mr. Pipes told participants that the United Nations' approach to the rights of Palestinian refugees "creates a narrative of victimhood" and "promotes extremism". Mr. Prosor told participants that "The refugee problem is the main obstacle to peace, not settlements". Former Israeli Knesset Member Einat Wilf also spoke, telling participants that it was important to "debunk the myth" that there were Palestinian refugees living in tents, and criticized the European Union for promoting the Palestine refugees' right of return. (*IMEMC*)

Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said in a statement that the Government was ready to cooperate with the recommendations of UNICEF contained in its report entitled [Children in Israeli military detention: observation and recommendations](#). The statement said, "Israel will study the conclusions and will work to implement them through ongoing cooperation with UNICEF, whose work we value and respect". (*Israel Hayom*)

Protesters in Gaza organized a mass rally in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli plans to grant final approval for a military academy in East Jerusalem had been delayed to avoid tensions ahead of President Obama's visit, *Army Radio* said.

The controversial project, to be built on the Mount of Olives, had been on the agenda of a 6 March meeting of the Ministry of the Interior's district planning committee but had been taken off at the last moment, the *Radio* said. The project was approved by a local committee in January but still needed the final sign-off by the district committee before tenders could be issued. (*The Gulf Today*)

8

Israeli Police Spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said that Palestinian worshippers rioted after the Friday prayers at the Temple Mount [Al-Haram Al-Sharif] and that the police dispersed the crowd with stun grenades. He said that several police officers were slightly injured but that the police did not enter the mosque. (*AP*)

Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* reported that Israeli judges and courts had been giving reduced sentences to Israeli perpetrators who assault Palestinians, and that such practice would encourage such assaults. (*IMEMC*)

Aziz Dweik, Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council and a Hamas party leader, said that Hamas would not oppose a visit by President Obama to the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Chief Palestinian Negotiator Erakat condemned Canada's warning that it would cut off its aid if the Palestinians took Israel to the International Criminal Court. Referring to Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird's warning to cut off aid, Mr. Erakat said, "those who fear international courts must force Israel to stop its crimes." (*Palestine News Network*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the estimated population of Palestine at the end of 2012 was 4.35 million of whom 2.21 million were males and 2.14 million females. (*Wafa*)

Settlers cut some 130 olive trees in Reef area south of Nablus, north of the West Bank. (*Palestine News Network*)

The Palestinian Detainees Centre reported that, as the world and Palestine marked International Women's Day, Israel continued its violations and was still holding captive eight Palestinian women under very difficult conditions. The Centre also reported that more than 10,000 Palestinian women had been detained since 1967. (*IMEMC*)

9

A group of 30 settlers attacked a 67-year-old Palestinian farmer north of Hebron, a local committee said. Israeli soldiers had been present at the time of the incident but did not intervene. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

10

Israeli soldiers arrested 11 Palestinians, including teenagers, across the West Bank, according to witnesses. (*Wafa*)

The Central Elections Commission (CEC) had completed the transfer of voter registry forms from Gaza to Ramallah and would publish the final registry on 10 April 10.

The Head of the Central Elections Committee, Hanna Nasser, said that the CEC had used scanners to digitally transfer the data as Israel had prevented the transfer of the registration applications to a West Bank processing centre. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Egyptian Ambassador to Palestine inspected the Al-Aqsa Mosque after what he called Israeli excesses against the Islamic and Christian sanctities of Jerusalem, especially the wall and checkpoints, and the enactment of laws that limited freedom of worship and access from the West Bank and Gaza to the Mosque. (www.egyptindependent.com)

At a press conference by PA Minister of Prisoner Affairs Qaraqe in Ramallah, the Minister, along with human rights organizations such as Al-Haq, urged President Abbas to take Israel to international courts for the ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners. (*presstv.ir*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club (PPC) said that the Majeddo Israeli prison administration cut off water to prisoners and banned family visits after the prisoners had returned meals in solidarity with prisoners on hunger strike. A prisoner informed PPC that "The situation is still tense ever since the death of prisoner Arafat Jaradat". Palestinian prisoners in Israeli Eshel prison also held a one-day strike by returning meals, in protest for having sent a number of them to solitary confinement and for having been denied medical care. Prisoners said that they will adopt further steps if the prisons' administration continue to overlook their demands. (*Wafa*)

11

Israeli soldiers stationed at the Hizma Roadblock north of Jerusalem took into custody the head of the Bil'in Village Council, a Palestinian non-violent activist, as he and dozens of residents and Israeli peace activists participated in a wedding procession were stopped and attacked at the roadblock. According to media sources, the wedding was organized at the roadblock to challenge Israeli laws that try to prevent Palestinians from the West Bank from living with their spouses in Israel. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli soldiers set up a temporary checkpoint and prevented female students from entering the Al-Aqsa compound, without providing a reason, the Al-Aqsa Foundation said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli military vehicles briefly entered the area of Juhor Al-Dik, south-east of Gaza City, for what an Israeli spokeswoman defined as "routine military activity in the central Gaza Strip area". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

President Obama met with leaders of Arab-American groups as part of preparations for his trip to the region. The White House said that President Obama had told the group that included representatives of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, American Federation of Ramallah Palestine, American Task Force for Palestine and Arab American Institute, that his trip was not meant to resolve a specific policy issue, but was an opportunity to demonstrate US commitment to the Palestinian people. (*AP*)

According to a PA crossings official, 350 trucks with commercial and agricultural goods were expected to enter the Gaza Strip by way of the Kerem Shalom crossing, while two truckloads of wooden furniture would leave for Egypt. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Twenty-three members of the European Parliament had written to European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton calling for the suspension of the Association Agreement with Israel because of the latter's violation of the terms of the agreement. (*Wafa*)

Israeli activists caught on film an attack by a settlement security guard on a Palestinian shepherd near the village of Susia in the southern West Bank. Two Israeli soldiers had been present at the time of the beating but had not intervened. (*IMEMC*)

A group of settlers blocked route 60, the main north-south highway in the West Bank linking Nablus and Jenin, preventing Palestinian cars from passing, a PA official said. Settlers threw stones at Palestinian cars driving in the area, causing damage to several vehicles. An Israeli army spokesperson said that a "military exercise simulating rock hurling" was taking place near Shave Shomron, without providing further details. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A group of Palestinian prisoners wrote to the PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs, asking to be included in negotiations for the release of Palestinian detainees and said that they were ready to give up their Israeli citizenship to be released. According to the prisoners' human rights group Addameer, 185 of the 4,812 Palestinian political prisoners were from Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society said that prisoner Samir Issawi was in a critical and deteriorating condition and might lose his life. It further reported that the administration at the Israeli Ofer prison had moved three other Palestinian detainees on hunger strike into solitary confinement. (*IMEMC, Wafa*)

12

IDF troops shot dead a Palestinian and wounded at least nine others during an overnight clash at the Fawwar refugee camp, south of Hebron. Six Palestinians had been killed by the IDF in the West Bank since the start of the year. (*AFP, DPA, Wafa*)

Israeli forces arrested 10 Palestinians, including a minor, from several areas of the West Bank, local and Palestinian security sources said. (*Wafa*)

Lebanese security officials said that clashes between rival Palestinian factions in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp had resulted in one fatality and at least 13 injured. (*AP*)

An errant Palestinian rocket, not an Israeli air strike, likely killed the baby of a *BBC* reporter during the fighting in Gaza last November, an report released by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has indicated. (*AP*)

"The issue of the prisoners would be the no. 1 issue during the talks of [President Abbas] with President Obama," a Palestinian official said. "President Abbas will also demand the release of prisoners who have been on hunger strike for the past few months." The issue of settlements, according to the official, will occupy second place on President Abbas' agenda. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide said during a visit to Washington, D.C., that President Obama's upcoming visit to the Middle East would be critical to reviving the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process. (*KUNA*)

Fatah Commissioner of International Relations, Nabil Sha'ath, stressed the need for the European Union to pressure Israel to abide by the signed agreements and the terms of references stating that Palestine was an independent State. He also praised the recent EU report that called for imposing sanctions on Israeli settlement products from the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton said in a letter to PLO Executive Committee member Hanan Ashrawi: "the [European] Union is now actively engaged in the process of ensuring that – in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967... the European Union and its Member States have also reiterated their commitment to ensure the continued, full and effective implementation of existing European Union legislation and bilateral agreements applicable to settlement products." (*Wafa*)

Hatnua party Chairwoman Tzipi Livni said: It is "critical for us to reach a final status agreement" with the Palestinians. "Having two States for two nations is the most basic interest of the Jewish people", adding that this solution was the "only way we can preserve the existence of a democratic Jewish State". (*Ynetnews*)

Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told an audience at Tel Aviv University that if the peace process did not happen in the following months, it would be the end of the two-State solution. It would once again make President Abbas resort to the UN, triggering an increase in negative responses by Israel, he said at the OneVoice Israel-sponsored event. Based on his acquaintance with newly-designated Minister of Justice Livni and her commitment to a real two-State solution, Mr. Serry considered it an opportunity for serious negotiations. (*PRNewswire*)

Hamas attacked a new Israeli initiative to increase tourism from Muslim countries in East Asia and Africa, India and Pakistan. Hamas also said that the Israeli move will not succeed in changing Muslim attitudes or keep them from defending the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It also called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States to compel its members to reject the initiative. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The World Bank's latest [report](#) to the AHLC during its meeting in Brussels on 19 March, explored the damage to the competitiveness of the Palestinian economy wrought by the worsening fiscal situation and Israeli restrictions in the absence of political progress. Since the late 1990's, the value-added of the tradable sectors had declined, with productivity in agriculture having been roughly cut in half and the manufacturing sector stagnating. The share of exports in the economy had dropped to 7 per cent, one of the lowest in the world, mostly consisting of low value-added goods and services exported to Israel. Infrastructure had deteriorated particularly in the Gaza Strip. The labour force could also lose long-term employability. (www.worldbank.org)

In an interview with UN News Centre, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Filippo Grandi, warned that providing access and resources to the 500,000 Palestine refugees trapped in Syria were among the "most urgent" priorities but could only be achieved with appropriate financing from the international community, adding that it was also incumbent on the international community and the Security Council "to find agreement on how to put an end to this violence". (*UN News Centre*)

A settler had attempted to deliberately run over two Palestinians in his car in the town of Tuqu, east of Bethlehem, according to a local source. (*Wafa*)

President Obama's visit to Israel had sent Israeli entrepreneurs and future homeowners in [settlements] into a building frenzy, as they feared that the visit could entail another settlement freeze. (*Ynetnews*)

The Government of the Netherlands' consideration of issuing instructions to supermarkets to clearly mark products originating from Israeli settlements had not been an attempt to bash Israel, but to protect the consumer, Minister for Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans said in the Parliament. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinian detainee Samer Issawi had stopped drinking water in an escalation of his 223-day hunger protest, his lawyer said. Mr. Issawi started refusing all liquid on 11 March in protest at having to wear ankle restraints and being shackled to his hospital bed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli court had rejected an appeal to overturn the administrative detention of Palestinian Legislative Council member Ahmad Attoun who was arrested on 4 Feb and sentenced to six months detention, without charge or trial. (*Ma'an News Agency, WAFA*)

The Palestinian military liaison office in Bethlehem had intervened in the release of a 14-year-old girl from Bethlehem after the IDF had detained her for stone-throwing. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The spokesperson of the de facto Ministry of the Interior in the Gaza Strip accused Fatah of depriving thousands of people from Gaza of passports and threatened that Hamas would issue its own version of Palestinian travel documents. The PA spokesperson questioned the technical and diplomatic capacity of Hamas to issue such documents, noting that PA-issued passports were the only ones recognized internationally, and added that such a move would harm Palestinian sovereignty and boost internal division. (*Xinhua*)

13

Hamas had denied claims by Shin Bet that it was planning terrorist operations against Israel and increased efforts to set up terrorist cells in the West Bank. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces raided Tulkarm and detained two Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Confrontations broke out at the Fawwar refugee camp south of Hebron a few hours after the IDF had shot and killed a local resident.

Israeli military vehicles entered the Gaza Strip east of Khan Younis in breach of the ceasefire. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Minister Linkevicius said that his country upgraded Palestine's diplomatic office in Vilnius to that of a mission. (*WAFA*)

US President Obama may skip Ramallah during his upcoming visit to the region, a source in the Palestinian Government said. The Palestinian official said that Mr. Obama would meet President Abbas in Bethlehem and will spend only four hours in the West Bank that would include a visit to the Church of the Nativity. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a press release, the British Consulate General in Jerusalem said that the United Kingdom had provided \$18 million to support the PA amidst its financial crisis and help it deliver essential services and strengthen critical institutions. It stated that \$6.4 million of the amount had been added in response to the progress the PA was making in reforming itself. (*WAFA*)

The World Bank transferred \$60.5 million to the Palestinian Government representing funds contributed by the Governments of Great Britain and Norway to help support urgent Palestinian budget needs, providing inter alia support for education, health care and other vital social services for the Palestinian people and for the economic reforms currently underway. (*Palestine News Network*)

The passage of diesel to the Gaza Strip via the "Kerem Shalom" crossing had been renewed, with the entry 138,000 liters of fuel contributed by Qatar. The passage had been closed for the past six weeks. (*Ynetnews*)

The Minister of National Economy, Jawad Naji, stated that the PA had decided to apply additional taxes on goods imported from China to strengthen national products and increase Government revenues. However, economic experts believed that the decision was likely to increase indirect imports through Israeli middlemen, and that it would eventually support the Israeli economy and maintain the economic stagnation in Palestine. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's High Court of Justice was expected to rule on Israel's right to declare ownership of 1,000 acres of undeveloped land located in the "Efrat" settlement. Such expansion would cut Bethlehem off from areas to its south. (*Haaretz*)

An Israeli law firm formally announced its request to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensada, to open a criminal investigation into violations by PA President Abbas and nine members of Hamas for war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A number of extremist Israeli settlers cut dozens of Palestinian olive trees near Qaryout village, south of Nablus. (*IMEMC*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS) had warned that the health of prisoner Mohammad Al-Taj, from Tubas, was becoming critical. A lawyer with the PPS had visited the prisoner at Ramle clinic and said that he needed an urgent lung transplant. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

On the occasion of Palestinian Cultural Day, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics noted a boom in cultural centres in Palestine for the year 2012, with 577 centres operating in the West Bank and 69 in the Gaza Strip. The activities of the centres had attracted an audience of some 565,000. (*PCBS*)

The European Union Representative to the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, John Gatt-Rutter, opened in Gaza City an exhibition of photos taken by young Palestine refugees who had participated in the EU-UNRWA photo competition entitled "Change the Picture", according to an EU press release. (*WAFA*)

The Mavi Marmara convoy that departed from London loaded with medical aid for Gaza residents had been blocked at the Libyan border for the activists' lack of visa. (*Anadolu Agency*)

14

Israeli soldiers invaded several Palestinian communities in different parts of the West Bank and arrested 31 Palestinians. (*WAFA, IMEMC*)

Palestinian medical sources in Nablus reported that dozens of Palestinians had been treated for the effects of tear gas inhalation after the army invaded the nearby Talfeet village and clashed with local youths. (*IMEMC*)

Salah Bardaweel, a political leader of Hamas, stated that his movement would continue the smuggling of weapons into the coastal region as part of its resistance activities against "the Israeli occupation". He added that "No one in the entire world could stop it from doing so". (*IMEMC*)

An Israeli woman and her three daughters were injured in a car accident caused by stones hurled by Palestinians on Route 5 connecting Tel Aviv and Ariel. (*Ynetnews*)

Eyewitnesses reported that the Israeli navy had fired dozens of rounds of live ammunition at several fishing boats and into the air in an attempt to force the fishermen back to the shore, in the coastal area off the northern part of the Gaza Strip. The fishermen were had been within the six-nautical mile area. (*IMEMC*)

PA President Abbas, in his meeting with Russian Federation President Putin said that he hoped "that later this year, we will see the start of substantive negotiations with Israel" while admitting that chances for a political settlement were slim. (*AFP*)

President Obama said in an interview with Israel's *Channel 2* television broadcast that his forthcoming trip to Israel and the Palestinian territory would be an opportunity for him to "listen" to both sides and hear their views on how to move forward after over two years without peace talks. (*tribune.com*)

After Israeli parties had reached agreement on their coalition Government, Chief Palestinian Negotiator Erakat expressed the "hope that this Israeli Government will choose peace and negotiations and not settlements and dictation". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas criticized President Obama for neglecting the Islamic movement during his planned visit claiming that would "deepen the Palestinian division." (*Xinhua*)

The CEC said that it had received a decision from the Cabinet that set the second complementary municipal elections in 36 localities in the West Bank for 1 June. A court decision had postponed elections because no electoral lists had qualified for nomination in some localities, and in other localities, the majority of council members had resigned. (*WAFA*)

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli soldiers had handed a Palestinian landowner a notice requesting him to uproot 100 palm trees on his land, near the settlement of Argaman, north of Jericho. (*WAFA*)

The European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Israeli authorities to promptly open an independent, impartial and transparent investigation into the circumstances of Arafat Jaradat's death and into all allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of Palestinian prisoners. In that same resolution, the European Parliament reiterated its call on the Israeli Government to immediately release all imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, including Marwan Barghouti, and to make sure that Palestinian women and children prisoners and detainees received appropriate protection and treatment in line with the relevant international conventions to which Israel was a party. (*europarl.europa.eu*)

Israeli authorities released a Hamas Member of Parliament from Ramallah after he had served eight months in jail. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

15

According to eyewitness accounts, IDF soldiers shot and seriously injured a Palestinian man near Tulkarm in the northern West Bank after security forces at the Nitzanei Shalom crossing were targeted by Molotov cocktails. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Radio reported that the police decided to limit the entry of Muslim men to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound after receiving intelligence reports that Palestinians were planning to riot after Friday prayers. (*The Jerusalem Post*)
The Israeli army announced that it had arrested 10 Palestinians suspected of connections to a rock attack that injured several Israelis near a West Bank settlement. (*Ma'an News Agency*)
According to Palestinian doctors, a Palestinian man had died from wounds sustained weeks earlier when Israeli forces fired tear gas at his car in north-east Jerusalem (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli political leaders signed agreements to form a new Government that would almost certainly complicate the prospect of jump-starting a moribund peace process, focus attention on the economy and widen the rift between the ultra-Orthodox and more secular communities. The new Government, with a 68-seat majority in the 120-member Parliament and a relatively small 22-minister Cabinet, would only be the third since 1977 that would not include ultra-Orthodox parties that had a vigorous opposition. Five factions were represented with a range of constituencies and somewhat contradictory positions on critical questions including the Palestinian conflict. (*The New York Times*)

The annual spring meeting of the AHLC would be held in Brussels on 19 March. The meeting will be hosted by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Ashton, and will be presided by Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide in his capacity as chair of the AHLC. PA Prime Minister Fayyad will attend the meeting. (*europa.eu*)

In a recent staff report, prepared for the AHLC meeting, the International Monetary Fund noted that the economy and public finances of the West Bank and Gaza had deteriorated further since 2012. The economy had been hobbled by persistent restrictions and increasing political uncertainty. (*www.imf.org*)

According to the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, the Russian and Palestinian Governments were studying possibilities of constructing a power station in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian worker while he was at his workplace place near Aqraba village, south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Yoaz Hendel, chairman of the Institute for Zionist Studies, set up the first rightist human rights organization of its kind. The organization intends to monitor the violation of Palestinians' human rights at West Bank checkpoints, collate testimonies of apparent war crimes by IDF soldiers, and provide medical assistance to Palestinians and African asylum-seekers. (*Haaretz*)

16

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli police arrested three Palestinian minors, aged 16, 15, and 14, in the village of At-Tuwani, south-east of Hebron. (*Wafa*)

According to Ahmad Salah, spokesman for the Committee against the Wall and Settlements in Al-Khader, a group of Israeli settlers seized farmland in the town of Al-Khadr, south of Bethlehem. (*Wafa*)

The PA Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs announced that an Israeli court in Petah Tikva had decided to postpone delivery of the final medical reports related to the death the previous month of Arafat Jaradat while in Israeli custody. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

17

The Palestinian Central Elections Commission announced that voter registry lists would be published for 36 municipalities on 23 March, ahead of local elections in June. Most of the West Bank voted for new councils in October and November 2012 but a new round will be held in 36 municipalities on 1 June. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a report issued by the European External Action Service, it was announced that the EU and The Netherlands would continued to support the PA by contributing €20.8 million to salaries and pensions for the month of February. (*eeas.europa.eu*)

According to local activists, settlers raided an area east of the village of Kusra, south of Nablus, and set fire to a chicken coop owned by a Palestinian. (*Wafa*)

A Palestinian from the village Kusra arrived at an Israeli police station to submit a deposition in connection with a car torching incident in February. He was, however, interrogated for several hours for allegedly fabricating a "price-tag" attack [by settlers]. He was later released on bail. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel's incoming Minister of Housing, Uri Ariel, announced that Prime Minister Netanyahu's incoming Cabinet would keep expanding settlements to the same extent as the previous Government. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

According to head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Society, a prisoner, Ayman Sharawna, arrived in Gaza having signed an agreement with Israeli authorities to be deported to the enclave for 10 years, bringing an end to the hunger strike he had launched on 1 July. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Wrapping up four years of investigation, the Russell Tribunal on Palestine met in Brussels and called on the International Criminal Court to investigate "crimes" committed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It added that it would support all initiatives from civil society and international organizations in bringing Israel to the Court. (*channelnewsasia.com*)

18

Israeli police said that Palestinians wounded a 60-year-old Israeli man in a drive-by shooting at a bus stop near the "Kedunim" settlement in the West Bank. (*The Washington Post*)

According to an indictment that had been filed at the Jerusalem District Court, a 23-year-old Palestinian from Jerusalem and his friends were being accused of planning to carry out a terror attack against Jews living in the city's Abu Tor neighbourhood. (*Ynetnews*)

According to reports, there had been an escalation in attacks on Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers. Israeli forces had arrested 41 Palestinian children in the first half of March while eight minors had been injured. Dozens of children had come under attack and had been wounded during peaceful demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. (*Palestine News Network*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu had chosen Moshe Ya'alon, a right-wing former armed forces chief, to be the next Minister of Defense. Mr. Netanyahu said that his experience was needed to tackle challenges in a turbulent Middle East. (*The Chicago Tribune*)

According to the PA Minister for Foreign Affairs, Riad Malki, Palestinians will judge the incoming Israeli Government by the level of its commitment to peace and the two-State solution. (*xinhuanet.com*)

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said in an interview with *Bloomberg TV's Conversations with Judy Woodruff* that President Obama should push to reopen Israeli-Palestinian peace talks but that he was not expecting any major breakthroughs from the President's Middle East visit during the week. He said that he was pessimistic because the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist parties in the region were not inclined to support an overall Israeli-Palestinian peace pact. (*www.globalsecurity.org*)

A Qatari committee announced that a local construction company had been contracted to begin the first phase of reconstruction projects in the Gaza Strip. The project to rebuild Salah Addin Street, running from Rafah to Khan Yunis, would cost over \$70 million. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The employees of the Palestinian Government in Gaza said that deductions had been made from their monthly salaries to pay debts to an electricity company. A lawyer confirmed that such deductions were illegal. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli and Palestinian business communities had picked a Turkish businessman, Rifat Hisarcikloğlu, as the sole international head of the Jerusalem Arbitration Centre that mediates commercial conflicts between their business groups. (*hurriyetdailynews.com*)

Avigdor Liberman, the former Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs and chairman of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, stressed that he did not believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be solved and rejected a freeze in settlement construction. "After seeing no result following the 10-month freeze, I said [that] I would oppose any freeze inside or outside the [major settlement] blocks. We are willing to make gestures but they cannot be one-sided." (*Ynetnews*)

According to a local activist, settlers stormed Palestinian owned agricultural land in the village of Burin, south of Nablus, and damaged agricultural tractors. (*Wafa*)

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said that that deportation to Gaza of prisoner Ayman Sharawna was a violation of the Geneva Conventions. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian prisoner Samer Issawi, who had been on hunger strike for more than 240 days, sent a statement to the Palestinian people, through his lawyer, reiterating his refusal to be deported to Gaza "as this practice will just bring back bitter flashbacks from the expulsion process which our Palestinian people were subjected to during 1948 and 1967". (*Palestine News Network*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross announced that Israel had suspended family visits to prisoners from Gaza for three weeks during the Jewish holidays. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A military court convicted an Israeli soldier of negligent homicide in the death of a 21-year-old Palestinian worker who was shot in January near the wall in the southern Hebron Hills. (*Haaretz*)

The UN Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem. Christine Chanet, Chair of the group, told the Council that Israel must "immediately and without preconditions cease the settlement activity and to initiate a process of withdrawal from the settlements". (*AFP, www.unog.ch*)

19

Israeli forces detained a PA security officer near a refugee camp, south of Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli soldiers arrested five Palestinians from several towns in the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

After President Obama's visit, the US Secretary of State Kerry will return to the region and meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss peace talks. (*Haaretz*)

Dozens of Palestinians protested in Ramallah against President Obama's upcoming visit to the West Bank. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

In an interview for *The Atlantic* magazine, [King Abdullah](#) of Jordan expressed fear that time was running out for the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. ([www.upi.com](#))

The AHLC meeting in Brussels [called](#) on donors to continue the provision of predictable assistance to the PA so that it could meet its financing requirements for 2013, that was estimated at \$1.2 billion. The donor meeting welcomed the PA's decision to persevere with the structural reforms, widen its tax base and contain spending and, among other things, called for further collaborative efforts to strengthen the collection of revenues, for bolder steps by Israel to facilitate growth and the reopening of the borders of Gaza for the passage of all legitimate goods and people. ([www.consilium.europa.eu](#))

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton met, in the framework of the AHLC meeting, with PA Prime Minister Fayyad and signed a €7 million financing agreement aimed at supporting the Palestinian presence and promoting social and economic development in Area C. Ms. Ashton stressed that development in Area C was "of crucial importance for the economic viability of Palestine" and looked forward to working "towards a significant change in Area C". ([europa.eu](#))

According to local sources, Israeli settlers hurled stones at numerous Palestinian owned vehicles as they passed by the "Yizhar" settlement near Nablus. (*Wafa*)

A motion had been tabled in the British Parliament that calls on the Government to make renewed and increased representations to insist that the Israeli Government cancel immediately its policy of administrative detentions and restore rights to all Palestinian prisoners. ([parliament.uk](#))

According to the regional director of the Euro Mediterranean Monitor for Human Rights, the Arab and Islamic blocs in the United Nations were drafting a resolution to ask the Human Rights Council to adopt the conclusions of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission investigating the implications of Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

20

The IDF arrested a number of Palestinian youths for throwing stones at a military checkpoint in Hebron. Some of the youths were taken into police custody for further investigation. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli soldiers beat up students who had been on their way to school in Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Israeli soldiers detained nearly 30 Palestinian minors who had been on their way to school in Hebron. (*B'Tselem*)

The Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition by the residents of the Arab village of Beit Safafa to order work stopped on a highway that would cut through the community. (*Haaretz*)

According to Palestinian security sources, Israeli forces razed agricultural Palestinian owned land south of the village of Yabod, near Jenin, for the expansion of a nearby Israeli military checkpoint. (*Wafa*)

President Obama arrived in the region for a three-day trip. He was met by Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Peres. (*The Washington Post*)

Palestinian opposition figure Mustafa Barghouti said that President Obama's tilt towards Israel, as seen in his itinerary, had disappointed Palestinians and sped up the end of a two-State solution. (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian activists erected some 15 tents within the Al-Ezzariah village, east of Jerusalem. The organizers said that their action aimed at "first, to claim our right as Palestinians to return to our lands and villages; second, to claim our sovereignty over our lands without permission from anyone; third, to protect our land from continued confiscation and threat of settlement and colonization; and fourth, to expand popular resistance as one form of resistance, out of many, that our people are engaged in everywhere." (*Wafa*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a screening of the documentary "Arafat" during its 349th meeting at UN Headquarters. (*Division for Palestinian Rights*)

21

Israel said that two rockets that were fired from the Gaza Strip landed in its southern territories. There were reportedly no injuries. PA President Abbas condemned the rocket attacks noting that "Violence against civilians, regardless of its source, including rocket fire" was unacceptable. ([xinhuanet.com](#))

In response to the rockets that had been fired into Israel, newly appointed Minister of Defense Minister Ya'alon immediately restricted Gaza's fishing area to three miles and ordered a cargo crossing point closed. A small Islamist group, Magles Shoura Al-Mujahddin, had claimed responsibility for firing the rockets. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

"We condemn all rocket fire and call for it to stop," said a UN spokesperson. "We urge restraint and we remind all sides of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians." (*United Nations*)

According to eyewitness accounts, Israeli forces detained a Palestinian and assaulted two others in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an address, President Obama sought to convince young Israelis to reshape the internal political dynamics that had seen peace talks frozen for two years. "Peace is necessary. Indeed, it is the only path to true security... You can be the generation that permanently secures the Zionist dream," President Obama said, warning that a two-State solution was the only way to ensure that Israel remained a Jewish State amid changing demographics. He said that "Given the frustration in the international community about this conflict, Israel needs to reverse an undertow of isolation." (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post*)

President Peres told President Obama that Israel's new coalition would make it hard for Prime Minister Netanyahu to achieve progress in peace negotiations with the Palestinians. (*Haaretz*)

Chief Palestinian Negotiator Erakat underlined the importance of the upcoming Arab Summit in Doha saying that it would contribute to strengthening Palestinian reconciliation and support to the Palestinian people. (*The Gulf Times*)

President François Hollande of France said that US President Obama's visit to Israel promoted the peace process in the Middle East and called on the Palestinian and Israeli sides to hold direct and unconditioned negotiations with the support of the international community. ([www.mna-leb.gov.lb](#))

According to PA Presidential Adviser Nimr Hamad, President Abbas told President Obama during their bilateral meeting that there could be no talks with Israel without a freeze in settlement construction. (AFP)

President Abbas had reportedly softened his demand that the Israeli Government publicly pledge to halt construction of new settlements on Palestinian land before negotiations could resume. The shift in the Palestinian leader's stance had been laid out in a draft set of talking points prepared for Mr. Abbas by his negotiating team in advance of his private meeting with President Obama. (The New York Times)

Hamas Prime Minister Haniyeh released a press statement stating that President Obama's visit to the region would not achieve a diplomatic breakthrough. According to Mr. Haniyeh, the purpose of the US President's visit was to perpetuate the Israeli occupation and give a seal of approval for the construction of settlements. (Ynetnews)

In a joint news conference with President Abbas, President Obama said that continued Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank was an obstacle to peace but that it should not prevent the Palestinians from returning to the negotiating table. "We do not consider continued settlement activity to be constructive, to be appropriate, to be something that can advance the cause of peace" he said. (The Washington Post, AFP)

According to Amnesty International, Israel's separation Wall through the occupied West Bank, that cut Palestinians off from their farmland, as well as settlement construction, were ongoing violations of international law. (Amnesty International)

According to Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East Director at Human Rights Watch, resolving human rights problems should not await a comprehensive settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "President Obama should use this visit to demonstrate that his administration is serious about promoting human rights and will press hard for accountability for abuses." (Human Rights Watch)

According to security sources, the Palestinian district liaison office intervened in the release of 13-year-old twins who had been arrested by Israeli troops in Hebron's Old City the previous day. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Palestinian Water Authority issued a [press release](#) on the occasion of World Water Day stating that Israel controlled the majority of renewable water resources totalling 750 mcm, while Palestinians received only about 110 mcm, and that more than half of water supplied to Israeli settlements was extracted from Palestinian wells and aquifers. ([www.pcbs.gov.ps](#))

22

Jerusalem police decided to limit the entrance of Muslim worshipers to the Temple Mount (Al-Haram Al-Sharif) on Friday amid intelligence information that disturbances were being planned at the site. Only worshipers above the age of 50 were to be admitted. (The Jerusalem Post)

US State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland [told](#) reporters that the US had unblocked almost \$500 million in aid to the PA that had been frozen by Congress for months. "To date, we have moved \$295.7 million in fiscal year 2012 money ... and \$200 million in fiscal year 2013 assistance," she said. (AFP, [www.state.gov](#))

In a telephone call to Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed regret for the raid in 2010 on a Gaza-bound flotilla, and offered compensation, Turkish and Israeli officials said. Mr. Erdoğan accepted Israel's gesture. At one point, President Obama got on the phone with both leaders as they spoke, a senior American official said. (The New York Times)

Israeli forces notified a Palestinian man that his tract of land measuring 3,000 square metres near Al-Jalama checkpoint, north of Jenin, would be confiscated by the administration for the enlargement of the checkpoint and installation of a security gate at its main entrance. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution regarding the follow-up to the report of the fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. (Human Rights Council)

UNRWA announced that beginning 1 April 2013, more than 10,000 of the poorest refugees would receive priority placement in its Job Creation Programme that would secure for them at least three months of employment and income. ([www.reliefweb.int](#))

23

Israeli forces opened fire on fishermen off Gaza's coast, forcing them to comply with a newly imposed reduced fishing zone following a rocket attack on southern Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli settlers threw stones at Palestinian cars travelling near Nablus and smashed their windows. (Wafa)

Israeli forces detained 18 Palestinians in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

In a statement, UNRWA said: "It is with great distress that UNRWA has learned of the violent deaths of five Palestine refugee children, one in Dera'a on 15 March and four others in the Damascus area on 19 March. Four of the children reportedly died as a result of the use of heavy weapons." ([www.unrwa.org](#))

24

Israeli officials said that Israel had not committed to ending its Gaza blockade as part of its reconciliation with Turkey and could clamp down even harder on the territory if security was threatened. "We have nothing against the Palestinian people. The maritime blockade derives from security considerations only, as terrorist groups can smuggle huge amounts of weaponry by sea," Defense official Amos Gilad told Israel's Army Radio. (Reuters)

The IDF ordered the closure of the West Bank for the upcoming Passover holiday until 26 March. During the closure the IDF would allow crossings only for humanitarian, medical and exceptional circumstances. (The Jerusalem Post)

On the occasion of Palm Sunday and the beginning of the Holy Week in Jerusalem, PLO Executive Committee member Ashrawi spoke of her outrage at the increasing denial of entry to Jerusalem for Palestinian Christians, saying "There should not even be a question of needing permits to visit one's own city." She said that early reports had indicated that people from Palestinian Christian communities in the northern West Bank had had to cancel their Palm Sunday celebrations in Jerusalem owing to a lack of Israeli-issued permits. (Wafa)

Israeli police evacuated 40 Palestinian activists and their tents from an undeveloped area of the "Ma'aleh Adumim" settlement in the "E-1" area. (The Jerusalem Post)

25

Israeli forces detained five Palestinians in the West Bank, including a 15-year-old in Ramallah. (Wafa)

PLO Secretary-General Yasser Abed-Rabbo told Voice of Palestine radio: "US efforts will increase in the coming weeks and will include other Arab parties such as Jordan and Egypt." He added that a delegation from the League of Arab States was to visit Washington, D.C., as part of the efforts, but said that there would be no flexibility on Palestinian demands for a settlement freeze. "For us, the important thing is the substance, such as the full settlement freeze and the recognition of the 1967 borders," he said. (AP)

President Abbas arrived in Doha to attend the League of Arab States Summit. Financial support to Palestine was expected to be discussed. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's office [said](#) that he had decided to allow the transfer of tax revenue to the PA. ([www.pmo.gov.il](#))

The director of the Al-Aqsa Mosque warned that Israel had tightened restrictions on Muslim holy site in Jerusalem and that Israeli forces had seized the keys to the Moroccan Gate to allow extremist settlers access to the compound. (Ma'an News Agency)

A group of settlers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem and performed religious rituals. The forces prevented Palestinian students from entering the area while the settlers prayed. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces released from prison a Palestinian Imam from Qalqilya after a two-month administrative detention. (Ma'an News Agency)

The European Union and Young Entrepreneurs Palestine [launched](#) a new youth initiative called “Yalla Shabab”, that would include several activities in partnership with Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza, such as lectures at Palestinian universities about current affairs, volunteer days, cultural activities and a reporting competition on water issues for young Palestinian journalists. (<http://eeas.europa.eu>)

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An Israeli military jeep stationed near the eastern borders the Gaza Strip near Khan Yunis opened fire on Palestinian houses. No injuries were reported. (*Palestine News Network*)

A high official of Israeli Forces Central Command said in a TV interview that Palestinian violence in the West Bank had increased. He did not speak of a third intifada, but he said that “For months, we have identified trends of a potential escalation.” (*The Jerusalem Post*)

An IDF soldier was lightly injured by Palestinian stone throwers near the West Bank village of Al-Arub, north of Hebron. (*The Times of Israel*)

A Palestinian man carrying four improvised pipe bombs was arrested at a checkpoint in the northern West Bank, near the settlement of “Bakot”, according to IDF sources. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian man after raiding his house in Hebron. (*Palestine News Network*)

Palestinian human rights organizations urged President Abbas not to endorse the death sentence passed by the Gaza Military Court against a collaborator with Israel, labelling it as “tough and inhuman”. They also called for the suspension of the PLO Revolutionary Penalty Law of 1979, as it was not a constitutional law ratified by the Palestinian parliament. (www.gulfnews.com)

The PA and Hamas welcomed Qatar’s call for holding a mini-Arab summit to discuss ending the dispute between the two Palestinian parties. The call was issued by the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, in a speech he delivered during the League of Arab States Summit in Doha. The Emir said that the mini-summit would be held in Cairo as soon as possible with the participation of representatives of the two Palestinian parties, and it would seek to set a timeline for implementing previous reconciliation agreements between the two sides. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Addressing the summit of the League of Arab States in Doha, Sheikh Hamad Al Thani of Qatar called for the establishment of a \$1 billion fund to finance projects for the conservation of the Arab and Islamic identity of Jerusalem and aid the Palestinian people in facing the policies of the Israeli occupation. The Emir offered to contribute \$250 million to the fund. (gulfintimedia.com, *BBC*)

The Palestinian Government debated a draft 2013 budget as presented by Prime Minister Fayyad that amounted to \$3.9 billion, with \$1.4 billion needed in “external financing”. (*AFP*)

A World Bank study found that the digital economy can leap geographic obstacles and bring new employment opportunities to Palestinians in the area of micro-work. The study explored the feasibility of micro-work as a path to job creation for Palestinian youth and women who can become digitally mobile economic actors using relatively basic digital infrastructure. (*Wafa*)

Israeli authorities issued a military order authorizing the takeover of tens of dunums of land owned by Palestinians of the village of Nahhalin, near Bethlehem, for the construction of 70 new housing units for Jewish settlers, a local official told *Wafa*. The Deputy Head of the village council added that the expansion “aims to link the two nearby settlements of ‘Bitar Ellit’ and ‘Jv’ot’, would tighten the closure on the village and deprive a number of the village’s families of their sources of living.” (*Palestine News Network*)

The Middle East Foundation of Deutsche Bank announced its partnership with the Palestine Association for Children’s Encouragement of Sport. (www.ameinfo.com)

The Welfare Association announced its plan to lay the corner stone of a Palestinian museum in Birzeit on 11 April under the auspices of President Abbas. The project, considered the first of its kind in Palestine and one of the cooperation’s most important projects, is planned to be built on an area of 40 dunums near Birzeit University. The museum would be a unique cultural project and would be developed to become the primary and most authoritative source of knowledge and new thinking about Palestinian history, culture and contemporary life, through research projects, educational tours and exhibitions. (*Wafa*)

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Israeli soldiers arrested nine Palestinians, including four youths in Hebron and Nablus, according to security sources. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces raided the city of Hebron early morning and detained five local Hamas leaders, according to an IDF spokeswoman. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas said during his speech before the League of Arab States Summit in Doha that Palestinians have the right to go to the International Court of Justice if the attempt to renew negotiations with Israel in the coming few months failed. (*IMEMC*)

A delegation of Arab ministers will head to Washington, D.C., to discuss the Arab Peace Initiative with President Obama’s new Administration, Chief Palestinian Negotiator Erakat said. The group will include the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar. Ministers from Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia may also attend, Mr. Erakat said. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

The 5th BRICS Summit adopted a declaration that stated: “In recalling the primary responsibility of the UNSC in maintaining international peace and security, we note the importance that the Quartet reports regularly to the Council about its efforts, which should contribute to concrete progress.” BRICS is an acronym of the world’s leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa. (*Xinhua*)

Palestine was opposed to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan’s intention to visit the Gaza Strip as it would deepen divisions, a senior Palestinian official was reported to have said. (*Hürriyet Daily News*)

US State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell said in a press briefing: “I really refer you to the Government of Turkey for more information on Prime Minister Erdoğan’s travel, but you know ... our opposition to engagement with Hamas.” (www.state.gov)

Israeli forces closed off the road leading to the central market in the old city of Hebron to allow settlers to visit an archaeological site there. (*Wafa*)

Settlers, backed by Knesset Member Liberman, had urged the IDF to change its rules of engagement and treat stone-throwing the same as live fire. The appeal followed a recent surge in stone-throwing incidents across the West Bank that culminated in the severe injury of a 3-year-old child. (*Ynetnews*)

Jewish settlers raided the evacuated “Homesh” settlement south of Jenin under Israeli army protection. Security sources told *Wafa* that settlers had broken into the settlement in the early morning and set up mobile restrooms. The settlement was evacuated in 2005 as part of Israel’s plan to remove some settlements from the West Bank, but settlers often returned to the settlement in attempts to rebuild it. (*Palestine News Network*)

The EU adopted the second part of its 2013 assistance package for Palestine. The amount of €148 million would ensure critical support to the PA and UNRWA for the continued provision of vital services in the area of health, education and social services to the Palestinian people. (europa.eu)

The Artery of Life Committee in Amman declared that it was starting preparations to send the “Ansar 4” solidarity convoy to the Gaza Strip to deliver financial, medical and humanitarian supplies. The convoy will leave Amman on 5 May after collecting all donations in order to purchase the needed supplies. (*IMEMC*)

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A member of Hamas’ armed wing died in a tunnel collapse in eastern Gaza, medical officials and witnesses said. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

The Shin Bet, the IDF and police arrested five Palestinians in Beit Fajjar, near Bethlehem. The men were charged at a military court with carrying out shooting attacks and throwing firebombs at the “Migdal Oz” settlement in the “Gush Etzion” block, and placing a mock bomb. No one was injured in the incidents. (*Ynetnews*)

A 12-year-old was in critical condition after having been shot in the head with a rubber bullet in clashes with Israeli forces in Hebron, medics said. Three other Palestinians were also injured. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal said in an interview in Doha that President Obama offered nothing new for the Palestinians. He said that Hamas “believes in achieving its goals and needs through armed resistance, but nevertheless we are flexible and we will seize all the chances to benefit from any available opportunity”.

Mr. Mashaal said he welcomed Qatar’s initiative on reconciliation. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu had spoken with Hamas leader Mashaal and Palestinian President Abbas on the subject of reconciliation, and intends to visit the Gaza Strip once some advancement in the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation efforts has been achieved, officials said. (*Haaretz*)

An Israeli military court extended the detention of a 22-year-old journalist from Hebron. The detainees' centre in Hebron said that Mosaab Shawer's work at a local radio station had focused on prisoners' issues. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Nationalist and Islamic Forces, a coalition of all Palestinian political factions, is planning a protest on 30 March to mark Land Day anniversary, a statement by the group said. Participants will march towards the Israeli-controlled checkpoint that separates Ramallah from Jerusalem. (*Wafa*)

Some 140,000 dunums (35,000 acres) of land exposed by the receding water of the Dead Sea had been registered as State land by Israel, rejecting the claims of Palestinians who had hoped to use it for a tourism project. (*Haaretz*)

Just 0.7 per cent of State lands in the West Bank had been allocated to Palestinians in the past 33 years, while settlements received 38 per cent, according to documents submitted by the Israeli authorities to the High Court of Justice. (*Haaretz*)

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Ahead of Land Day, hundreds of Palestinians took part in two demonstrations in Hebron, and threw stones at Israeli security forces that responded with tear gas and dyed water. Both sides said that there had been no arrests or injuries. In Jerusalem, thousands of police reinforcements were deployed, Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Samri said. Israeli authorities restricted access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs Baird said that he wanted to know the PA's priorities before he renews Canada's five-year \$300 million aid for the Palestinians that would expire on 31 March. Mr. Baird had planned visit to the West Bank in 10 days where he would meet President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad.

(*National Post*)

The EU, Austria and Ireland were making their first contribution for 2013 in the amount of €9.6 million to support impoverished Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The assistance was expected to reach 60,000 families, with more than half of them in the Gaza Strip, according to EU Representative Gatt-Rutter.

(*Wafa*)

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Commemorating Land Day, more than 15,000 people marched in central Tunis chanting support for the Palestinian people. "We are marching today to make sure that the rights of the Palestinian people to move freely by sea or land are respected, and against the blockade on the Gaza Strip," David Heap of the GazaArk human rights watchdog said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During Land Day commemorations near Bethlehem, clashes erupted between teens and Israeli soldiers, who arrested 11-year-old Saleh Musa and his father. Many others were also sickened by tear gas. (*Wafa*)

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The IDF detained two Palestinians in the Husan village, west of Bethlehem, and a teenager from Beit Unnar, Popular Committees' spokesman Muhammad Awad said.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF closed two main roads that connect Nablus and Qalqilya, and Nablus and Ramallah, as settlers celebrated Passover, witnesses said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During his Easter Sunday message, Pope Francis urged Israelis and Palestinians to resume peace talks and end their conflict. (*Ynetnews*)

According to Palestinian sources, eight Palestinian girls from an area south of Nablus were lightly injured when settlers from "Yizhar" threw rocks in their direction and then drove away. (*The Times of Israel*)

In a statement, the Palestinian Presidency condemned the entry of 280 settlers into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the arrest of several Palestinian worshippers using tear gas, rubber bullets and electric shocks. The statement also condemned the entry of tens of settlers into Solomon's Pools located near Bethlehem. (*Wafa*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II and President Abbas signed an agreement confirming Jordan's role as custodian of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque. "It is also emphasizing the historical principles agreed by Jordan and Palestine to exert joint efforts to protect the city and holy sites from Israeli Judaization attempts," the Palace said. (*AFP*)

The week-long civil society World Social Forum's closing statement expressed support for the Palestinian popular resistance and called for the rights of Palestine refugees, the release of Palestinian political prisoners, the dismantling of Israel's wall and an end to Israel's siege of the Gaza Strip. The statement also condemned normalization with Israel by countries, institutions or companies. The Tunis Forum's General Assembly called for an embargo on arms to Israel and urged more flotillas to break the Gaza blockade. It also called for the dissolution and restructuring of the Quartet. (*Ma'an News Agency*)
