

Division for Palestinian Rights
***Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine***
 Monthly media monitoring review
 September 2006

Monthly Highlights

- PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh agree on formation of national unity government ([11 September](#))
- Quartet issues statement welcoming efforts by PA President Abbas to form a government of national unity ([20 September](#))

I
 A journalist and a protester were injured at a protest against the separation wall in Bil'in. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh urged teachers not to strike at the start of the new academic year as demanded by their union to protest the non-payment of salaries. He spoke after taking part in a clean-up campaign in Gaza City organized by Hamas activists following the strike by municipal workers. (*AFP*)

At the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Lappeenranta, Finland, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solan outlined a process which would allow Hamas to meet EU demands that the group recognize Israel, renounce violence and accept past agreements. He said the first step would have to be the creation of a Palestinian government of national unity. "If there is a government of national unity which President Abbas has negotiated and which accepts his principles, we will deal with that government," said an EU diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Finland's Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja said: "We have to be ready to talk with all relevant parties, including Hamas.... We have to put pressure on Hamas to accept the demands of the international community." Asked if the EU was ready to deploy troops in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Tuomioja said, "That could also be something that is needed." (*DPA, [www.eu2006.fi](#)*)
 US President George W. Bush and Jordan's King Abdullah II discussed Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian issue by telephone, according to the White House. (*AFP*)

Donor countries had pledged some \$500 million in aid to the Palestinians at the Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Palestinian Territories, said the Aid Minister of Sweden, Carin Jämtin. (*AFP, [www.swegen.gov.se](#)*)

The World Health Organization [warned](#) participants in the Stockholm International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Palestinian Territories that the health component of the revised humanitarian appeal was critically underfunded, despite growing humanitarian needs, especially in Gaza. ([www.who.int](#))

The European Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner [said](#): "I am glad to say that we are now delivering under all elements of the [Temporary International Mechanism]: essential supplies for hospitals, the uninterrupted supply of energy and the payment of social allowances." The allowances of around €270 will be paid to those who have suffered a significant loss of income due to the financial crisis, to pensioners and other hardship cases. ([www.europa.eu](#))

An Israeli security delegation is visiting Egypt to discuss the release of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit in return for Palestinian prisoners, Saudi Arabia's newspaper *Okaz* reported quoting Egyptian sources. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF launched an air strike on a *Reuters* car in the Gaza Strip on 26 August because the press vehicle markings were not visible in the dark, IDF announced. (*Reuters*)

2

At least five Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip, medical sources said. One of the Palestinians was killed at the "Kussufim" border crossing in the central Gaza Strip. Earlier, two Palestinians were shot and killed at Beit Hanoun during an Israeli incursion. The victims were identified as Mohammed Abu Oda, 60, and his son Ismail, 28. (*AFP*)

Thousands of unpaid teachers shut down schools across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, on the first day of the school year. Teachers launched

the open-ended walkout because the Hamas-led Government, impoverished by international sanctions, had not paid them or the 130,000 other government employees since taking office in March 2006. The 37,000 striking teachers were to be joined by the civil servant and health worker unions, putting a total of 80,000 workers on strike. Garbage collectors walked off the job earlier in the week. More than 1.1 million children were enrolled in nearly 2,400 schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the Ministry of Education. About 800,000 students attended 1,824 "state-run" schools. Hundreds of armed Palestinian policemen fanned out in the streets to prevent clashes between protesting Hamas and Fatah supporters. More than 500 Hamas members marched to the Ministry of Education building to demand that the schools be opened. (AFP, AP)

PA Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad called on Israel to unfreeze tax revenues worth \$600 million that had been held since late March 2006. He also called for easing the entry of aid money. (Xinhua)

3

Several IDF tanks and armoured vehicles rolled into eastern Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip amid intensive shooting, security forces said. No injuries were reported. (Xinhua)

4

Four Palestinians, identified as members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, were wounded in exchanges of fire when Israeli forces surrounded a house in the village of Doha, near Bethlehem. In the Gaza Strip, five Palestinians were injured when the Israeli Air force struck and destroyed a home in the Jabalya refugee camp. (AFP, DPA)

The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud El-Faisal, said that the Arab League would meet on 23 September to discuss a proposal to renew the regional peace process with Israel. "Our hope is that everyone will see the subject from a new perspective, that of seeing the importance to the region of a solution to the problem," he said. (Ha'aretz)

A [press release](#) issued by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) said that the Saudi Arabia Committee for Relief of the Palestinian People would finance the construction of 100 housing units in the West Bank city of Hebron at a cost of \$6.3 million. (Wafa, www.unhabitat.org)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas held talks with the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Mr. Abbas briefed the President on the latest developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The two leaders discussed international efforts to revive the stalled peace process. (AFP, Wafa)

5

Israeli forces arrested a senior member of PA President Abbas' special guard at a checkpoint in the West Bank. Mahmoud Damra, a commander of a group known as Force 17, was detained near Ramallah. The army had no comment on the arrest. (Reuters)

In Nablus, an Israeli woman was slightly hurt by rocks thrown at her. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli troops arrested 10 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. Between 1 and 5 September 2006, 2,203 Palestinians were caught in Israel without permits. (Ha'aretz)

Thousands of armed demonstrators broke into a Government compound in the Gaza Strip, smashing windows in a violent protest on the fourth day of the strike over non-payment of civil service salaries. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, businesses in several towns stayed closed in a show of solidarity with the workers. A day earlier, PA Prime Minister Haniyeh accused "certain people of using the strike to denigrate the Government" and warned that it "could have dangerous consequences on the social situation and national unity." (AFP)

Thousands of Palestinian security and police officers recruited in different security services demonstrated in the Gaza Strip to protest not having received their salaries since March 2006. Col. Jamal Hammad, spokesman of the national security services, told reporters that the demonstration was not against the Government. "It is against the siege imposed by Israel and the United States on the Palestinian people," he said. The protest had been banned by President Abbas, who said that security officers did not have the right to hold marches against the Government. (AFP, Aljazeera, Xinhua)

Businesses in Ramallah, Tulkarm and Bethlehem stayed closed in a show of solidarity with the PA civil servants' strike. (AFP)

PA President Abbas was on the second day of a two-day trip to Bahrain, as part of a regional tour. During a press conference in Manama, Mr. Abbas said, "The workers are entitled to strike to secure the basic necessities of their livelihood, especially since they have not received their salaries in six months." He denied accusations of having encouraged the strike. In an earlier meeting with the King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King affirmed support for the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. (AFP, DPA)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Perez said that once abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit was freed, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert would invite PA President Abbas for talks based on the [Road Map](#). PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said, "We believe that any time Mr. Olmert is ready to meet, the meeting should be very well prepared, because what counts should be the substance." Israeli Government spokeswoman Miri Eisin said Israel had no preconditions for a meeting between the two leaders. Separately, President Abbas stressed that negotiations on the prisoner exchange had not yet been concluded. (AFP, AP, BBC, Ha'aretz)

Prime Minister Olmert said he did not know in advance of the tenders for building hundreds of apartments in the West Bank. A day earlier, the Housing Ministry had solicited tenders for the construction of 690 apartments in the "Beitar Ilit" and "Ma'aleh Adumim" – the largest such project approved to date by Prime Minister Olmert. Housing and Construction Minister Meir Sheetrit assumed there was no need for special approval from the Prime Minister's Office, since the construction had been planned for large settlements. (Ha'aretz)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh told *The Guardian* that Palestinian parties were close to establishing a new unity government to be led by Hamas. He said, "The majority in the parliament will head the government. First of all, everyone has to respect the choice of the Palestinian people." (Reuters, *The Guardian*)

"Arab Foreign Ministers will look at the possibility of the Middle East peace process file going back to the UN Security Council," Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told reporters at a joint press conference with Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Arab League will decide "the strategy adopted when the Arab countries head to the Security Council which will hold a meeting to discuss the peace process on September 21," he said. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "We need to look at comprehensive peace in the region based on UN resolutions and the concept of 'land for peace'... and this is where the initiative of the Arab League... becomes important and critical." Security Council President Adamantios Vassilakis told a news conference: "No one, including the Arab countries, is interested in having a debate for the debate... We are trying to have something that would rejuvenate the peace process." The Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Yahya Mahmassani, said: "We are coming to the Council... to bring about a very serious discussion on the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on all tracks and to reach a decision of the Council to start meaningful and fruitful negotiations leading to peace between Arabs and Israelis." Israeli Government sources said the proposal was an attempt to evade applying the first stage of the Road Map involving the dismantlement of terrorist organizations. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, UN News Centre)

Ireland's Sinn Fein party leader Gerry Adams appealed to Israeli and Palestinian leaders to resume the peace process at a press conference in

Jerusalem. Israeli officials refused to meet him because he was scheduled to meet PA officials who belonged to Hamas. (AFP)

6

Four Hamas militants were killed in IDF air strikes against two vehicles in Rafah. A fifth Hamas militant was killed in an air strike east of Khan Yunis, while IDF ground troops carried out a ground incursion in the area in which a 16-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed, and 10 Palestinians arrested, PA officials said. More than 20 people were wounded in the Gaza Strip, medics said. (AP)

IDF troops wounded a Palestinian and arrested five others during operations in the West Bank cities of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus, PA security sources said. (Wafa)

Seven Palestinians were killed in five different IDF strikes in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources said. In the West Bank, a leading Islamic Jihad member, Muhamed al-Sabe, 26, was killed during an IDF raid in Jenin. In the Gaza Strip, IDF troops shot and killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in Khouza, a village near Khan Yunis, and wounded three others. A third Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded in a third IDF air strike close to the perimeter fence with Israel, just north of the Sufa crossing. The remaining four Palestinians, all Hamas members, were killed in two different IDF air strikes that took place before dawn. (Ha'aretz)

Some 30 staff of PA Prime Minister Haniyeh's office went on strike demanding overdue salaries. (AP)

Employees at the PA President's Office went on strike to demand salaries. About 70 employees in President Abbas' office stood outside the building, some holding banners expressing their distress. "We are with democracy, but we want to feed our children," read one banner. (AP)

At the Arab League ministerial meeting in Cairo, the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, said that the League would call on the Security Council "to review the peace process ... and to find a new and effective mechanism to activate it, based on Security Council decisions and the Arab peace initiative." The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and president of the last session Mohammed Hussain Al Sha'ali, also called for a time frame for the re-launch of the peace process. Without giving further details, an Arab diplomat attending the talks told AFP that the League's Peace Committee had agreed on a unanimous position which would be put to the Security Council.

(AFP, The Egyptian Gazette)

7

The IDF, accompanied by Israeli intelligence, stormed the Askar refugee camp, south-east of Nablus, arresting Sana Qandeel, 24, security sources said. (Wafa)

Israeli Police officers arrested a Ramallah man suspected of stabbing and moderately wounding Ran Shimon, 63, in the Atarot industrial zone, north of Jerusalem, on 5 September. The suspect, 24, admitted during his interrogation that he had stabbed Mr. Shimon in the shoulder. (Ha'aretz)

Four Palestinians were killed and 10 were wounded by Israeli fire during an army operation in the northern West Bank, medical and security sources said. Israeli troops rolled into Qabatiya, near Jenin, and surrounded a house where three members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were hiding, sources said. A firefight broke out between the Palestinians and Israeli soldiers, who were backed up from the air by a helicopter. (AFP, Aljazeera)

In Amman, visiting Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema urged Israel to follow up on its decision to ease its embargo of the Gaza Strip. Before heading to Ramallah, Mr. D'Alema also reiterated calls for the deployment of international observers in Gaza. "We have welcomed the Israeli decision to lift the sea blockade imposed on Lebanon and we hope that something like it will happen in Gaza, starting with the reopening of the Rafah crossing," Mr. D'Alema told reporters in Amman. "This will allow the delivery of supplies of relief aid to the Palestinian people in Gaza who are suffering hardships," he added. (AFP)

On a visit to Damascus, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other officials to discuss ways to end violence in the region. "We are here to help resolve the Middle East crisis. It is clear that only a comprehensive settlement could bring peace," Mr. Lavrov said. Earlier in Beirut, Mr. Lavrov had spoken in favour of maintaining a dialogue with Hamas and Hezbollah and objected to their isolation on the international arena. "Hezbollah and Hamas are organizations that reflect the result of the decades-long attempts to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is a manifestation of Arab attitudes toward the problem and an inseparable aspect of political affairs in both Palestine and Lebanon," Mr. Lavrov told journalists. (www.interfax.ru, Reuters)

In an ad placed in the *A l-Ayyam* newspaper, hundreds of Palestinians including politicians and intellectuals, told British Prime Minister Tony Blair that they did not want him to visit Palestinian areas, accusing him of excessive support for Israel. (AFP, Reuters)

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee, called on all Palestinian factions to join a proposed national unity government. "The door must be opened for all groups to take part in the anticipated government," Mr. Abed Rabbo told the *Voice of Palestine* radio. Mr. Abed Rabbo said that the Hamas-led Government was delaying formation of such a coalition, which was intended to ease the ongoing political and financial crises facing the Palestinians. He said that President Abbas had made a proposal to invite Hamas and the Islamic Jihad to temporarily take part in the PLO Executive Committee, as the PLO takes responsibility for holding negotiations with Israel.

(Xinhua)

8

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh vowed that his Government would not resign despite a serious fiscal and political crisis, which he blamed on Israel and the US. "The Government reflects the will of the people," he said in a sermon delivered in the Gaza Strip town of Rafah to more than 1,000 Muslim worshippers. (AFP)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that she opposed an international peace conference to discuss various aspects of the Middle East conflict, saying, "We are not enthused with the Arab League's initiative ... An immediate meeting with [PA President] Abbas is necessary so that we can hear about the problems of the Palestinian National Authority from him." Ms. Livni also said that Mr. Abbas should expect nothing from the talks, such as a release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, unless militants in the Gaza Strip freed the captured Israeli soldier. (Ha'aretz, Reuters, Xinhua)

Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema said that the European Union could be forced to withdraw its monitors deployed along the Egypt-Gaza border should the crossing remain closed. "The Palestinians, Israelis, we all have responsibilities and we have to decide together whether it is possible for Europe to stay there without any ability to decide on the situation while the borders are closed. I hope this issue can be solved in the next few days," Mr. D'Alema said. (AFP)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd warned that the living conditions of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had reached breaking point. "Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip over recent weeks was creating suffering and mass despair, rather than any desire for political compromise," she said. "It would be great to have an international presence, civilian, military, whatever," and that an international force of peacekeepers could offer Gaza's 1.5 million people some protection, Ms. AbuZayd said. (BBC)

UNDP reported that the estimated total cost of the damage in the Gaza Strip for the period between 28 June and 27 August 2006 was around \$46 million. (Wafa, www.undp.ps)

9

The IDF wounded three Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as its tanks and troops rolled into eastern Khan Yunis. Medical sources confirmed that at least one, a member of the Saraya al-Quds, was seriously wounded. (*Xinhua*)

A spokesperson of the EU observation commission at the Rafah Terminal in the Gaza Strip said that it was pressing hard for the opening of the crossing on the Egypt-Gaza borders. (*Xinhua*)

About 13 Palestinian trade unions and companies launched a new initiative calling on the armed Palestinian groups to be out of the circle of military conflict. In a document, they blamed the Israeli siege for the deterioration, pointing out that several companies had either closed down or moved outside the Palestinian Territory. (*Xinhua*)

10

Jihad Abu Sneima, 14, was killed and his brother, 20, was critically wounded when an Israeli tank fired a shell in the southern Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said that the soldiers had fired at Palestinians suspected of planting a bomb. (*AFP, BBC, Xinhua*)

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said: "Hamas rejects the conditions of the Quartet since they are unjust conditions. We are doing everything to lift the siege against the Palestinian people, but this will not be done at the expense of Palestinian principles and rights." (*AFP*)

Following talks with PA President Abbas, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that if the Palestinians formed a government of national unity, he thought that "the international community should deal with such a government." President Abbas said he was prepared to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert immediately to discuss resuming the peace talks. Mr. Abbas also said that it was necessary to develop the appropriate mechanism for the renewal of the peace process. (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

Israeli MK Efraim Eitam called for the expulsion of Palestinians in the West Bank and the removal of Israeli-Arabs from the political scene. *Army Radio* reported. His remarks drew condemnation from Knesset members. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

11

Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian man and wounded two others near the West Bank town of Jenin. Witnesses said the troops opened fire on a car travelling from the village of Roumane, killing the head of the local village council. (*BBC, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Israeli troops arrested 21 Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm and Hebron. In the Gaza Strip, five Palestinians were arrested in Khan Yunis. (*Ha'aretz, Wafa*)

Two Palestinians were killed in clashes between Fatah and Hamas members in the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas said he had reached an agreement with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh over the formation of a national unity government that could be constituted in a matter of days. "We have finished defining the political programme of a national unity government, based on the national reconciliation document," according to Mr. Abbas. He was expected to dissolve the Hamas-led Government within the next 48 hours. Mr. Haniyeh would be charged with forming the new government, according to reports. (*AFP, BBC, Ha'aretz, Wafa, Ynetnews*)

The Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, Sami Abu Zuhri, said that the organization would never recognize Israel, even if the national unity government did. A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry source said: "If the Palestinian Government does not clearly accept the three conditions [of the Quartet], we will not hold negotiations with it, nor will we renew the transfer of tax revenues". According to experts at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the worst possible scenario for Israel was one in which the international community recognized the new Palestinian government even though it had not met the Quartet's conditions. A senior Hamas legislator, Salah al-Bardawil, confirmed that the new government's platform would be based on the Prisoners' Document and on the Arab Peace initiative, which, he said, "will have a role in any future diplomatic process", adding "It is not possible for the Quartet to determine the Palestinians' national political programme." However, he continued, "everything is open for discussion." (*Ha'aretz*)

A Hamas representative said that PA Prime Minister Haniyeh had agreed to indirect recognition of Israel by accepting the 2002 Arab peace initiative as part of the platform of a national unity government. Head of the Hamas parliamentary faction Salah El-Bardaweil said that the group's political stance was based on the Prisoners' Document and the 2002 Arab peace initiative and that it would be possible to use the Arab peace initiative to serve the Palestinians' national interest. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas urged civil servants to halt their nine-day strike. "We call for a return to work and the end of the strike because all the sons of the Palestinian people should unite together in the national interest," he said. (*AFP*)

An Israeli court convicted a settler of killing four Palestinian workers in a West Bank shooting spree on 17 August 2005. The settler, Asher Weisgan, had taken the workers to jobs in "Shiloh" and once there, opened fire on the workers. (*Reuters*)

Israel opposed an Egyptian call to fix the borders for a Palestinian State before resolving other issues, saying the sides should first take confidence-building measures set out in the Road Map. "There are no magical fixes," according to Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mark Regev. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit had earlier said: "If we agree on a Palestinian State, its borders and its parameters, then we can deal from there, through negotiations, to try and achieve this aim." (*Ha'aretz*)

An Israeli human rights group, Volunteers for Human Rights, issued a report stating that Israeli police had failed to follow through on the vast majority of complaints by Palestinians in the West Bank. Only 10 per cent of the complaints against settlers had led to indictments, the report said. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

12

An IDF soldier was killed in exchanges of fire with Palestinians when IDF reservists set out for a routine operation adjacent to the security fence in central Gaza near Deir al-Balah, where a gun battle erupted between the soldiers and two armed Palestinians. The Popular Resistance Committees said that they had carried out the ambush. (*Ha'aretz*)

A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was killed during an Israeli military operation in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, Palestinian security sources said. (*AFP*)

The IDF discovered a 500-metre tunnel in the central Gaza Strip containing weapons, a military radio reported. The tunnel was nine metres below the surface. (*AFP*)

An Israel Air Force (IAF) air strike destroyed the Gaza home of a senior Palestinian security official in the Sabra neighbourhood, witnesses said. There were no casualties at the house, which belonged to a Hamas member. An IDF spokesman said that the house had been targeted because it was being used to store weapons. Meanwhile, witnesses said that an IAF missile had missed a group of "wanted" Islamic Jihad militants in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah. No injuries were reported in the Rafah air strike. (*Ha'aretz*)

An IDF judge ordered the release of at least 18 Hamas legislators, including three Cabinet ministers, detained after an IDF soldier was abducted by Palestinian militants. A lawyer for the detainees said the release roster issued by the Ofer Military Court included at least three Palestinian Cabinet ministers, among them Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer, who was arrested in late August. However, implementation of the ruling had been deferred until 14 September in order for prosecutors to appeal. (*Ha'aretz*)

At a press conference following his meeting with the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Miguel Angel Moratinos, in the Presidential headquarters in Gaza, PA President Abbas called on the Israeli Government to release the abducted Ministers, MPs and other officials before the formation of the new national unity government. (*Wafa*)

A high-ranking Palestinian source said that the new PA Government would include seven ministers from Hamas, including the current Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh, four ministers from Fatah, two from the Third Way party, one from the Palestinian National Initiative party and two from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri denied that any consultations had taken place regarding the posts in the

new government, adding that only the limits of the Government's political programme had been agreed upon. Fatah spokesman Jamal Nazzal said: "Fatah, as a faction, has no interest in participating; the decision was taken by Fatah just to save the country from international isolation and economic destruction". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ghazi Hamad, spokesman for the Hamas-led Cabinet, said that Hamas was ready to give President Abbas a chance to pursue his agenda. "We have no problem that this [new] government will have peace talks with Israel," he told Israel's *Army Radio* in Hebrew. Later, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that the new government would not actually be involved in any peace talks because negotiations were supposed to be handled by the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was also headed by Mr. Abbas. Mr. Hamad said that the Palestinians would also be ready to establish an independent State in territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 war. While he said that Hamas would not recognize Israel's right to exist, the new coalition agreement was based on a platform that implied recognition of Israel. In Gaza, President Abbas declined to give details on the governing platform, but said: "We do have a positive agenda, an acceptable agenda that will allow the new government to deal with Arab and international resolutions." Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz said that he hoped the new government would accept the international conditions, but warned that Hamas could be covering up its true intentions. (*AP*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was on her way to Washington, D.C., where she would discuss the new Palestinian Government with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. (*AP*)

US State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said: "from what we have seen so far, we are certainly concerned that the national unity government does not appear to meet the Quartet's call for a PA Government that meets specific criteria that we have outlined before". "Nothing can move forward until such time as there is a government in place that does meet that criteria and that would, therefore, be a reasonable partner for peace for Israel," he argued. "We are continuing to be mindful of the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people," Mr. Casey further said, adding that the US Government had provided \$468 million in direct assistance in 2006. The next day, PLC member Hanan Ashrawi, named as a potential future PA Foreign Minister, told a Jerusalem correspondent for *Ma'an*, "I advise [the US Administration] to take their time, act slowly, before issuing such judgements as the government is not formed yet and it has not published its political programme or platform. Our aim is not to form a government that satisfies America or others; the world should deal positively with any Palestinian steps". (*AP, DPA, Ma'an News Agency, www.state.gov*)

A day after returning from a three-day trip to the Middle East, British Prime Minister Tony Blair called for the lifting of economic sanctions on the Palestinian Authority, following reports of an agreement on a government of national unity. "Yesterday's announcement of a government of national unity in Palestine is precisely what I hoped for," he said, adding "on the basis [that] it is faithful to the conditions spelled out by the Quartet, that is the UN, EU, US and Russia, we should lift the economic sanctions on the Palestinian Authority." (*AFP*)

French President Jacques Chirac, when receiving visiting Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheik Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, "underlined the urgency to resume the dialogue between Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert," said Jerome Bonnafont, spokesman of the French Presidency. (*Xinhua*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II, during a meeting with visiting PA President Abbas, called on the Palestinians to form a coalition government as an opportunity to resume the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, *Petra* reported. (*Xinhua*)

Noam Shalit, the father of abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, scheduled a press conference in East Jerusalem to call for an end to the abduction of his son. He was expected to ask PA President Abbas and Palestinian Prime Minister Haniyeh for his son's release. (*Ha'aretz*)

13

Ihab Abu Salha, 19, a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, was killed in Nablus when an explosive device he was preparing exploded, Palestinian security service officials said. (*AFP*)

The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military wing of the PFLP, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades issued a joint statement claiming responsibility for the launching of a mortar at an IDF post at Kissufim, in the south-east Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli authorities notified the residents of Al-Khader, a village southwest of Bethlehem, that they would appropriate hundreds of dunums of the village's land to continue the construction of the separation wall, which, when built, would cut off the eastern part of the village from the western one. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Human Rights Watch [said](#) that Israeli security forces had harmed Palestinian medical emergency personnel and damaged ambulances on at least six different occasions in the Gaza Strip between 30 May and 20 July 2006. The organization called on the IDF to ensure that its troops scrupulously respect the protected status of medical emergency personnel and facilities at all times while conducting military operations in the Gaza Strip.

(*WFA, www.hrw.org*)

PA President Abbas postponed the announced dissolution of the PA Government as Fatah and Hamas continued to negotiate final details of a unity government. Later in the day, he announced that Ismail Haniyeh would head the new PA unity government. (*AP, DPA*)

"The allegations and the rumours that Hamas had ceded its constant positions in the framework of the political agenda [of a future unity government] were wrong," stated a press release issued by Hamas. "The agreed political agenda ... did not include either implicit or explicit recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation" it added. (*Reuters*)

Palestinian Cabinet Ministers from Hamas handed in their resignations. PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement: "all the Ministers have placed their ministerial portfolios under the authority of the Prime Minister as a way of easing the path towards forming a national unity government." (*AP*)

Diplomats said that European States would be willing to start easing an embargo if a new unity government took steps towards meeting international standards. However, the new government should be more explicit in renouncing violence, recognizing Israel and abiding by interim peace deals if it hoped to restore full diplomatic and economic ties with the European Union. (*Reuters*)

"We want to revive the Road Map at the United Nations," PA President Abbas said during a televised news conference, adding that for that purpose, he planned to send a Palestinian delegation to the UN General Assembly session next week. (*AP*)

An Israeli military judge ordered the release of 21 Hamas ministers and parliamentarians detained in June. (*The Independent*)

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a press conference, backed a UN ministerial meeting next week to revive the Middle East Peace process. A series of proposals, agreed to by Arab Ministers, would have the ministers call for a quick resumption of direct negotiations to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mr. Annan said: "I received a call from President Abbas that they had reached an agreement with Hamas. He felt that this decision should satisfy the requirements and the conditions demanded by the international community." He added, "if that is indeed the case, he should really allow the international and donor community to move ahead very quickly and provide the assistance the Palestinian people need". The Secretary-General, referring to the Palestinian unity government said, "I think it is a very important development". (*AP, UN News Centre, WFA*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II called on Arab leaders to unify their position and give their top priority to the Palestinian issue over the next six months. The King said at the Jordan Youth Forum: "to find a just and lasting settlement to the Palestinian question is a priority that must top the concerns of Arab leaders, their people and the world". (*Petra News Agency, Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas said salaries of the employees of the PA are to be paid before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. (*The Jerusalem Times*)

Two Palestinian companies, Palestine Development and Investment Ltd. and PaITel, began handing out food coupons to more than 40,000 government workers as well as some 9,000 families of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails who normally receive stipends from the Government. The coupons, to be distributed over the coming days, are each worth NIS500 (\$114) and can be used to buy food from 700 shops across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The total cost is \$5.7 million. (*Reuters*)

The World Bank said that a Western embargo and Israeli restrictions could make 2006 the worse year in the PA's economic history. The agency said the average Palestinian's personal income would fall by 40 per cent, while the rate of poverty would rise to 67 per cent of the population. World Bank Director A. David Craig said, "We are now facing a severe economic crisis in Gaza and the West Bank – one that risks reversing the combined efforts of the past 13 years towards a sustainable economy". (*Reuters, Wafa*)

14

One Palestinian, identified as Iyad Abou Mor, was killed by Israeli troops near the Sufa Crossing in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Abou Mor was standing near his house and was unarmed. (*Xinhua, AP, Reuters, AFA*)

An IDF non-commissioned officer was killed by Palestinian gunmen during an IDF operation east of the Al Mughazi refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. (*Newsedge*)

The Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for launching six homemade projectiles into the Israeli towns of Nahal Oz, Sderot and Ashkelon. The Sami Al-Ghoul Brigades, a minor military wing of Fatah, also claimed responsibility for launching two homemade projectiles into Ashkelon. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested overnight 13 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (*www.idf.il*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh accused the US of undermining efforts to form a new Palestinian coalition government. Mr. Haniyeh told reporters, "the US Administration does not want the Palestinians to be unified. It puts obstacles in the way of this political coming together... It wants to extort the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Government." (*AP*)

PA President Abbas said there were three goals for the formation of the new government: one, securing the release of the captured Israeli soldier and solving the issue of the Palestinian prisoners, including the political officials; two, working out a truce; and three, lifting the current siege imposed on the Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli military court suspended the release of 20 Hamas legislators and ministers detained by Israel following an appeal by the military prosecutor, Osama Saadi, a lawyer for the detainees, said. The court was to hold a hearing on 18 September on a possible extension of their administrative detention. (*AP, Ha'aretz, Ynetnews*)

A new [UNCTAD report](#) warned that the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is on the verge of collapse. Projections indicate per capita income for 2006 will be half pre-2000 levels, unemployment will affect half of Palestinians workforce by end of the year and two out of three Palestinian households will fall below the poverty level. In 2005, the unemployment rate left 260,000 Palestinians jobless. This led to an increased dependence on external support and on imports, especially from Israel. (*The Middle East and North Africa Business Report, via Newsedge*)

After talks with French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy in Ramallah, PA President Abbas said: "We will call on the Quartet Committee and the UN Security Council to create a mechanism or a method to reactivate the UN resolutions, especially Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), to revive the peace process.... we agreed with the Arab League on presenting new ideas to reactivate the Road Map." He said he had talked with Mr. Douste-Blazy on the Palestinian internal agreement on forming a government of national unity. "This agreement includes the respect of all of the agreements signed by the PLO and the respect of the whole international legitimacy," he said, adding that several issues should be resolved before announcing the new government, such as Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, including Ministers and lawmakers, the captured Israeli soldier and the Israeli violations in the Palestinian territory. Mr. Douste-Blazy said: "the formation of a Palestinian government of national unity which takes into account the aims of the international community would constitute a major development. ... if it is confirmed, it should lead to a re-examination of the policies of the international community toward the Palestinian Government in terms of aid and contacts." He said that such a development should also be used "to add impetus to a revival of the peace process." (*AFP, Wafa*)

PA President Abbas received the President of the Party of European Socialists Poul Rasmussen and the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn. The President also received the Norwegian Envoy to the Peace Process in the Middle East, Svein Selje. (*Wafa*)

After a visit of Poland's President Lech Kaczyński to the Middle East, where he held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas, Mr. Kaczyński's foreign policy advisor, Andrzej Krawczyk, told a news conference: "we have offered both sides our help and we are ready to help to reach a dialogue between them... the President made that offer during his visit." (*Reuters*)

Israeli police banned the delegation of the European Peace Cycle, which included 24 cyclists of different nationalities, from travelling from Jerusalem to Hebron. (*Wafa*)

15

Israel mounted an air strike on a house in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no reports of casualties. The IDF said that the building had contained the entrance to a tunnel used for arms smuggling. (*Reuters*)

Israeli troops raided Tulkarm and Bethlehem overnight and arrested four Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A 28-year-old Palestinian woman was injured by Israeli bullets when 10 Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip amid heavy machinegun fire. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Three Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the northern Gaza Strip. Two rockets landed in hothouses in kibbutz Netiv Hasarah in the western Negev, while the third exploded in an open field near Shaar Hanegev, north of the Gaza Strip. There were no reports of injuries or damage.

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Gunmen killed Col. Jad Tayeh, a senior official in the General Intelligence service in Gaza, and four of his bodyguards in their car in a drive-by shooting near the Beach refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. The General Intelligence service is controlled by PA President Abbas. (*AP, Reuters*)

The following are excerpts from the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on the Middle East peace process adopted at its meeting in Brussels:

"The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement. The Council welcomed the prospect of a meeting between PM Olmert and President Abbas in the near future with a view to re-launching negotiations. It called for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions as well as to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian territories. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It further repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. The

Council reiterated the need for all parties to respect their Road Map obligations. It renewed its call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. Ministers reiterated that the EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

"The Council expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. In this context the Council recalled the strong EU commitment made at the Stockholm International Donor Conference on 1 September. It welcomed the expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, and agreed that its operation should be extended for a further three months. It encouraged donors and others in the region to make full use of the mechanism. The Council repeated its call on Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. The Council called for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and, in this regard, reiterated its continued commitment to EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. It urged that Rafah and all other border-crossings be re-opened and remain open."

(www.consilium.europa.eu)

16

Israeli forces raided the Balata refugee camp in Nablus and arrested three Palestinian brothers. Also, Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians in Tubas, after besieging a building of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign said Israel was to seize over 7,000 dunums of Palestinian land in the Bethlehem and Hebron areas for the construction of the separation wall and a "Jewish-only" road. (*Wafa*, www.stopthewall.org)

In the [Final Document](#) adopted at the Fourteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, States members of the Non-Aligned Movement "reaffirmed their support for the Middle East peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and on the principle of land for peace." States members also "condemned the ongoing and intensifying Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people, Israel's continued imposition of collective punishment upon the Palestinian people, and Israel's continuing construction of the Wall." They also "called for the urgent intensification of efforts by the Quartet and the entire international community, in particular the Security Council, to address the current political and humanitarian crisis, leading to the revival of the peace process and the resumption of negotiations between the two sides and to the full and honest implementation of the Road Map towards ending the occupation of the Palestinian Territory" and "emphasized the importance of the decisions of the recent Arab Summit in Khartoum, especially the call for reinvigoration of the Arab Peace Initiative adopted in Beirut in 2002." (www.cubanoal.cu)

The Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization sent a 15-truck convoy carrying 221 tons of relief aid to the Palestinians. Jordan had sent 215 aid convoys to the Palestinians since the start of the Palestinian uprising in 2000. (*Petra*)

17

Israeli forces arrested a 34-year-old Palestinian woman in Hebron. Israeli forces also arrested two Palestinians in Qalqilya and two members of the Palestinian security apparatus in Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces broke into several houses in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus and arrested two Palestinian brothers. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers from "Qedumim" seized a Palestinian house in Qalqilya. (*Wafa*)

Two rockets fired by Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip landed in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, slightly wounding one person and causing damage to farm equipment. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. (*AFP, AP, Ha'aretz*)

Close aides of PA President Abbas said that talks with Hamas over forming a new unity government were being put on hold until after Mr. Abbas' return from a trip to New York to attend the General Assembly because of disagreements with Hamas over existing deals with Israel. "All of the President's efforts have been disrupted by a number of statements from leaders of Hamas announcing the lack of readiness of any government formed by Hamas to respect the obligations and agreements of the Palestinian Liberation Organization," Mr. Abbas' aide Nabil Amr said in a statement. (*AFP*)

18

Before dawn, Israeli forces arrested nine "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: a Fatah militant in Qalil, south of Nablus; three militants in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus; three Islamic Jihad members a Hamas member near Hebron; and a militant in Beituniya, south of Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz, Wafa*)

An Israeli special unit, backed by military vehicles, stormed the Tulkarm refugee camp amid intensive gun fire and wounded two Palestinians, aged 27 and 17. (*Wafa*)

Israeli settlers burned 200 dunums of arable land in Nablus planted with olive and almond trees. (*Wafa*)

Palestinians fired two Qassam rockets at Israel, which landed close to the border fence between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel. There were no reports of casualties. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's bodyguards fired into the air to clear a path through striking government workers who mobbed his motorcade outside the parliament building in Gaza City in a protest over unpaid wages. Mr. Haniyeh was forced to cancel a speech to Parliament on the economic crisis in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. (*AP, Reuters*)

An Israeli fighter jet bombarded the house of Muslim Abu Jaradah, in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip. The residents were given half an hour's warning to evacuate. The Israeli Army claimed that the house was being used for storing weapons. Similarly, the Khuza'ah district, south-east of Khan Younis, and the area near the Kissufim crossing were exposed to heavy artillery bombardment. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli Defence Ministry announced that Defence Minister Amir Peretz had ordered the army to remove about 90 buildings constructed illegally by Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank. The Ministry said: "it must be noted that about 50 per cent of the illegal construction was conducted by Israelis". (*Ma'an News Agency, AP*)

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev said that Israel would transfer millions of dollars in tax rebates and release prisoners if Hamas softened its position and if the Israeli soldier captured in June by militants was released. "If they do that, then the Israeli commitment is to immediately follow through with substantial confidence building measures that would reinforce a positive momentum," Mr. Regev said. (*AP*)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Israel might release more Palestinian prisoners than expected as part of a possible deal covering the release of the Israeli soldier held by Palestinians, according to Egypt's state news agency *MENA*. "The outlines of the agreement, which is not yet complete, affirm the release of the Israeli prisoner in exchange for an initial large batch of women and children and then the release of Palestinian prisoners in three batches," the agency quoted Mr. Mubarak as saying. The President did not specify the number to be released but he indicated that the Israeli side had shown its willingness to release a number greater than expected, the agency said. (*Reuters*)

An Israeli military court withheld its final ruling on whether 18 detained Hamas lawmakers should be released from prison. The judge said he would

inform the prisoners' attorney when a decision had been made, but did not say when that would take place. (AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

In a press release, the World Bank said that a \$46.6 million grant was given to the Palestinian Authority to support the delivery of basic services and provide financing for non-salary expenditures in key delivery sections. The grant will finance urgent supplies and running costs in hospitals, primary health and rehabilitation centres, and social shelters managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The resources would be allocated for the procurement of essential pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and for the rehabilitation of schools. The grant would finance the non-salary budget of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Affairs over the next seven months. (Wafa, Reuters)

French President Jacques Chirac called for an international conference aimed at restarting aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In an interview with *Al-Arabiya* television channel, Mr. Chirac called the situation in the Occupied Territory "dramatic" and said that measures to prop up the Palestinian economy were an "absolute necessity". He also said that he hoped the international community would take up the French proposal for a conference that would be a first step toward restarting the flow of aid to the Palestinians, and warned that a failure to address financial problems could "create in the region a veritable humanitarian crisis." (AP)

19

Israeli troops killed Nabil Hanani, 26, during an operation in the village of Sanur, near the city of Jenin. Relatives of Mr. Hanani said that he was killed in an exchange of fire with the troops. The IDF also arrested 14 other "wanted" Palestinians across the West Bank. (Xinhua, Ha'aretz, Ynetnews)

Tawfeeq Abu Muhsen, 52, was wounded when the IDF opened fire at houses in the city of Tobias in the West Bank. Mr. Abu Muhsen was walking in the street. (Wafa)

A pregnant Palestinian woman died of unknown causes at the checkpoint of Tapuah in the West Bank. She told the soldiers that she did not feel well and needed to get to a doctor in Nablus. Israeli soldiers said they did not hold the woman up at the checkpoint. (Ha'aretz)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a homemade rocket into Netiv Ha'asara, an Israeli town north of the Gaza Strip.

In a statement, the Brigades said the launching operation was in response to the ongoing Israeli aggressions to the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, the Al-Quds Brigades claimed responsibility for launching two homemade rockets into the Israeli town of Sderot. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and PA President Mahmoud Abbas met at United Nations Headquarters. The Foreign Minister told *Israel Army Radio*, "The idea is to establish a permanent channel of dialogue ... Shalit's release stands between us and the Palestinians". She also said: "We made a lot of progress with the Palestinians before Hamas came to power". (The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that the meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Livni and PA President Abbas had focused on ways to revive dialogue between the sides in order to begin the implementation of the Road Map. He added that the talks were to pave the way for a series of meetings between Mr. Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. He also said: "the issue of Israeli soldier Shalit was brought up in the meeting as well as the Palestinian prisoners." Mr. Abbas reassured the Israeli Foreign Minister that a national unity government he was negotiating with Hamas would recognize Israel's right to exist. (Ynetnews, BBC)

In New York, PA President Abbas met separately with French President Jacques Chirac and South African President Thabo Mbeki. Mr. Abbas discussed with the Presidents the dire situation of the Palestinian people and the consultations with Palestinian factions to form a Palestinian government of national unity. Mr. Abbas also met separately with Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. (Wafa)

20

The Israel Air Force carried out an air strike on a house in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no casualties, the IDF and Palestinian witnesses said. "There was an aerial attack on a house which was used as a facility to store weapons," an IDF spokeswoman said. She added that residents had been warned in advance to leave the building. (Ha'aretz)

A 15-year-old from the Bedouin village of Rahat was moderately wounded when a Qassam rocket hit a Kibbutz in the Western Negev. Paramedics rushed the youth to the Barzilai Medical Centre in Ashkelon after he was hit in the chest by a piece of shrapnel. A second Qassam rocket landed in the greenhouses of the Erez communal farm that borders the Gaza Strip causing no casualties or damage. (Ha'aretz)

A 15-year-old Israeli boy was wounded by shrapnel and several people suffered from shock after a Qassam rocket landed near Kibbutz Erez in the south of Israel. Another rocket landed in an open area near Kibbutz Nir Am but caused no injuries or damage. (AP)

A worker in the al-Aoujoli money exchange in Ramallah said that Israeli soldiers had entered the house of the institution's director, confiscating all money as well as documents and customers' files. The IDF also went into the al-Hawari money exchange, blew up its door and took \$500,000.

In Nablus, Israeli soldiers entered the Jordanian Al-Ahli Bank and five other money exchange institutions where, at gunpoint, they forced the owners to hand over tens of thousands of Jordanian dinars. In Jenin, the IDF entered three money exchange institutions and took more than a million shekels and confiscated documents and checks. (Wafa)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh rejected conditions set by the Quartet for resuming direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority. "Conditions are being imposed on the Palestinian people. They want us to condemn the resistance and affirm that we recognize (international) agreements," Mr. Haniyeh told hundreds of Palestinians rallying in support of his Hamas-led Cabinet. "We are sticking by the national reconciliation document which does not recognize the legality of the occupation and reaffirms the legality of the resistance that will continue," Mr. Haniyeh added. (AFP)

Issa Qaraqe, a Palestinian PLC member from Fatah, described the governance of the ruling Hamas Cabinet as "a failure" and called for a change in the Palestinian political prospect. "Hamas and its [Cabinet] Government have failed to meet the minimum needs of the people while they still abide by unrealistic factional slogans," he told the *Voice of Palestine* radio, adding, "it is time to make changes in the Palestinian political prospect". (Xinhua)

US President Bush described PA President Abbas as a "man of peace" as the two met on the sidelines of the General Assembly. "We are in dire need of your help and support," Mr. Abbas told the US President, adding, "the Palestinian people desire peace, and there is no power on earth that can prevent the Palestinian people from moving toward the peaceful solution and living and coexisting in peace." (AP)

The Quartet issued a [statement](#) that welcomed the efforts by PA President Abbas to form a government of national unity in the hope that its platform would reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement. The Quartet underlined the need to implement fully the Agreement on Movement and Access. The Quartet endorsed the continuation and expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism and encouraged Israel to consider the resumption of tax and customs revenue transfers via the mechanism. It welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to request James D. Wolfensohn to report on the situation on the ground. The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to the Road Map. (UN News Centre)

In a speech to the General Assembly, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that Israel believed in a vision of two States; each of which should be home to its own refugees. "Instead of giving false hope, it is time to end the exploitation of the refugee issue," she said. Ms. Livni told the General Assembly she and PA President Abbas had agreed "to re-energize the dialogue between us, and create a permanent channel to pursue ways to advance together." (Reuters, UN News Centre)

At the opening of the Clinton Global Initiative conference in New York, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said: "We cannot put the cart before the horse by going for Iraq or Lebanon or Afghanistan without solving the Palestinian dispute." (AP)

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for firing two Qassam rockets from the Gaza Strip into Sderot in southern Israel. Israeli sources confirmed that two rockets had landed in the border city. There were no casualties, but a building was damaged. (*Xinhua*)

An Israeli shell killed three Palestinians near a rocket launcher in the northern Gaza Strip and damaged a water pipe and a building. Palestinian witnesses said the three casualties were teenage shepherds. A woman, aged 35, died after IDF soldiers stormed a house belonging to a member of Hamas during an incursion into the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah. IDF soldiers also killed a militant from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in an exchange of fire in the area. The IDF blew up a building where troops clashed with grenade-throwing militants. Their fate was unknown. (*Reuters*)

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinian university students in Hebron. Three Palestinians were arrested in Bethlehem and Nablus. (*Wafa*)

"The decision by the Quartet ... is a progressive position, and we hope that this position will contribute to stopping all forms of political and economic siege," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said. He said that Hamas was willing to consider a long-term truce with Israel and suggested that the group would not stand in the way of peace talks. Israeli officials were concerned that the US had joined the other Quartet members in supporting efforts for a PA unity government that would include Hamas even though the group still refused to recognize Israel, *Israel Radio* reported citing unnamed officials. (*AFP, AP, Ha'aretz*)

Tawfik Tirawi, PA Chief of Intelligence, accused PA Interior Minister Said Siyam of ignoring the names of the suspects in the killing of senior General Intelligence official Jad Tayeh that had been handed over by an investigative team and of failing to apprehend them. Some of the suspects were Hamas members, Mr. Tirawi told reporters. (*AP*)

According to an opinion poll conducted by Bir Zeit University, support for Fatah among Palestinians stood at 35 per cent, while support for Hamas had fallen to 31 per cent. (*AFP*)

In a second expansion push in less than three weeks, Israel's Housing and Construction Ministry published advertisements in the local press inviting bids for construction of 164 new housing units in the West Bank. Of these, 88 were in "Ariel" (currently more than 17,000 residents), 56 in "Alfei Menashe" (some 6,000 residents) and 20 in "Karnei Shomron" (some 6,500 residents). The Israeli Government was also considering a plan to retroactively approve the construction of West Bank outposts. PA Justice Minister Ahmed al-Khaldi told *AFP* that the move was "an aggressive act against the Palestinians and Palestinian land". Peace Now said in a statement, "The Olmert Government ... instead of dismantling outposts and freezing construction in the settlements ... is constructing further units and plans to authorize tens of illegal outposts. All these actions are in contradiction of the Israeli commitment to the Road Map and the commitment of the Labour and Kadima parties to their voters." (*AFP, www.peacenow.org.il*)

The UN Security Council held a ministerial meeting on reviving the Middle East peace process. The meeting was called for by the Arab League and was attended by PA President Abbas and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. *AFP* quoted an unnamed diplomat as saying that the US delegation had objected to the meeting, releasing a presidential statement which it feared would be used to attack Israel. (*AFP, UN press release SC/8836*)

Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres met with PA President Abbas at a New York hotel before Mr. Abbas was to give a speech to the UN General Assembly. Mr. Peres said after the meeting that there could be no summit between the two sides until IDF soldier Gilad Shalit was freed by Palestinian militants. However, Prime Minister Olmert told *Yediot Ahronot* in an interview published the next day, "since I know he [Mr. Abbas] is making efforts to bring about the soldier's release, I sent messages recently that I am ready to meet with him even before Shalit is freed". (*AFP, Reuters*)

PA President Abbas, [speaking](#) at the general debate of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, said that any unity government negotiated with Hamas would recognize Israel and renounce violence. (*BBC, UN News Service*)

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal told *AP*: "we have found, for the first time probably, a consensus that is very significant about the need for restarting the [Middle East] peace process". He said the Arab League Foreign Ministers would meet during the day to take "stock of the past failures that prevented peace from happening and urging a new look and approach to the peace process", which would "concentrate on the important issues, rather than the process itself. In other words, the final status negotiations, the border, Jerusalem, Palestinian rights and so on." (*AP*)

A group of activists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel marched together along the demilitarized zone between the Democratic People's Republic of North and the Republic of Korea, the world's last Cold War frontier. Carrying a peace banner, 18 activists climbed up a hill to an observation post inside the zone on the Republic of Korea side. The demonstration was part of a four-day peace festival which also featured cultural performances by the Israeli and Palestinian activists, a peace seminar and an art project by US cartoonist Ranan Lurie. (*AFP*)

Thousands of Palestinians gathered in central Ramallah to demonstrate against Pope Benedict XVI's recent remarks on Islam, and thousands more staged marches the next day in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, waving green Hamas banners. (*AP, DPA*)

22

Seven Israeli soldiers were wounded, one moderately and others lightly, by explosive devices thrown by Palestinians before dawn in Nablus. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. Four Palestinians, including a woman, were arrested in Nablus overnight and another eight elsewhere in the West Bank. (*AFP, Reuters*)

An Israeli plane fired two missiles at a two-story house in Rafah near the border with Egypt. The house was destroyed, but no injuries were reported. An IDF spokesman said that the house had been suspected of concealing a tunnel used to smuggle weapons from Egypt. (*AFP, AP*)

The Rafah Terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt reopened for the first time since mid-August, allowing some 4,000 Palestinians to cross. An IDF spokeswoman said it would stay open for 48 hours for humanitarian cases. EUBAM spokesman Pekka Korhola said that the crossing had opened at 8 a.m. (0500 GMT) and was due to be closed at 6 p.m. (1500 GMT). He said it would remain operational for two days, with only students, medical patients and pilgrims allowed from Gaza into Egypt on the first day. There were no restrictions on people crossing from the Egyptian side. Hani Jabbour, a Palestinian diplomat speaking by telephone from inside the border terminal, told *AP* that the crossing was opened to allow Palestinians to go to Saudi Arabia to celebrate the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Police briefly opened fire into the air when some civilians tried to force their way through the border in the morning, prompting a 15-minute interruption to crossings, a Palestinian security source said. (*AFP, AP, Reuters, Xinhua*)

The IDF imposed a closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year holiday beginning at sundown. The closure would remain in place at least until the holiday ends on the evening of 24 September. Israel's security forces also went on high alert during the holiday. (*Xinhua*)

Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for human rights workers, criticized Israel for cracking down on rights monitors and peace activists working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, telling the UN Human Rights Council, "I have received credible accounts of serious harm, including killings, that human rights defenders have suffered". Ms. Jilani, a human rights lawyer from Pakistan who visited the region in

October 2005, said that the PA was also to blame for the repression of field workers, lawyers, journalists, health professionals and humanitarian workers. She praised Israel for its general respect toward Israeli rights advocates working within its borders, but said that those same groups faced difficulties in promoting the rights of Arab communities, and Israel's Government showed "even less tolerance for the activities for the protection of the rights of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". "The practice and policies of the occupation result in conditions that place those defenders at grave risk and present serious obstructions to every aspect of their work." Ms. Jilani said. (AP)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh's political adviser, Ahmed Yusef, told AP that "there will not be a national unity government if Hamas is asked to recognize Israel." Instead, he reiterated Hamas' offer of a 10-year truce, to be mediated by an unspecified third party. Mr. Haniyeh, speaking to a crowd in Gaza City after Friday prayers, said that he would not head any government that recognizes Israel, adding, "we accepted the creation of a Palestinian state with full sovereignty on the territories occupied in 1967, as well as the right of return of the refugees, all this ... not in return for recognition - in return for a hudna [ceasefire]." Israel rejected the suggestion, with Government spokesman Avi Pazner telling AFP, "this does not interest us. What we demand from any Palestinian Government to be able to resume dialogue is that it submits to the conditions set by the international community". A close adviser to PA President Abbas, Nabil Amr, clarified that Mr. Abbas would not ask Hamas to explicitly recognize Israel, but to abide by PLO agreements that doing so. "We expect Hamas to agree to this," Mr. Amr said. (AFP, AP, DPA)

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, speaking on the *Al-Arabiya TV*, urged Palestinian leaders to find a united stance towards Israel and clarify whether they accept the Arab peace initiative of 2002 which recognized it. (AFP)

Médecins Sans Frontières issued a press release expressing serious concern about the deteriorating access to medical treatment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the district of Hebron in the southern West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency, www.msf.org)

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society brought seven trucks of food to Palestinians through the Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) border crossing. An Egyptian official at the Rafah crossing confirmed that the trucks carried 1,500 tons of sugar, flour and rice and that other trucks would follow once the Israeli authorities give the permission for the aid to enter. (Ma'an News Agency)

State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack, speaking about the Quartet meeting held the previous day, said: "quite clearly there is a high degree of dissatisfaction with the fact that Hamas has failed to live up to what it said it would do - that is, govern effectively in favour of the Palestinian people. There is a lot of ferment within the Palestinian political class and in the Palestinian areas." Deputy State Department spokesman Tom Casey said at a daily press briefing, "the only way forward is to have a Palestinian Authority government ... that adopts the conditions laid out by the Quartet previously back in January. That is what we're all looking for, and I think that is what is important for us as we move forward." (AFP, Xinhua)

Costa Rica resumed diplomatic relations with Kuwait, Bahrain and Yemen after Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno's talks with his counterparts in New York, its Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The developments came after Costa Rica announced on 16 August that it would move its Embassy in Israel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Diplomatic relations had also been resumed with Egypt and Jordan in the last two weeks. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Kuwait supported Costa Rica's bid for non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2008-2009, as well as its joining the political consultation mechanisms between Latin American nations and the League of Arab States. (Xinhua)

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, addressing the general debate of the sixty-first session of the UN General Assembly, said that the question of Palestine was at the core of the Middle East issue. "The peace process should be restarted in keeping with the relevant UN resolutions and the principle of 'land for peace' in the interest of reaching an early and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so that the countries involved can live in peace and the region can enjoy durable peace," he said. (Xinhua)

The World Bank [announced](#) that it had approved a \$13 million grant to help combat the threat of avian flu in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Of that amount, \$3 million is coming from the World Bank's Avian and Human Influenza Facility, a multi-donor financing mechanism set up earlier in the year, while the remaining \$10 million is coming from the World Bank's own resources. The money "will assist the PA to improve their readiness and protect the citizens from a potentially devastating threat as the migration season is around the corner," said Arif Zulfikar, World Bank Head of Department responsible for all Facility Grant Applications. "The proximity of outbreaks in neighbouring countries, coupled with a large volume of bird migrations, increases the probability of a spread of the virus among domestic poultry and thus places the West Bank and Gaza at high risk," the press release said. (AP, DPA, www.worldbank.org)

The two-day sixth Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Industry was held on the island of Rhodes under the Barcelona Process, which started in 1995. It brought together officials from 37 countries - the 25 EU members along with candidates Bulgaria and Romania, and Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the PA, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey. The Ministers said that they would work toward creating a free-trade zone by 2010. (AP)

President Jacques Chirac pressed the case for an international conference to restart the stalled Middle East peace process in a phone conversation with Israel's Prime Minister Olmert. (AP)

23

More than 1,000 PA employees protested outside PA President Abbas' office demanding payment of long-overdue salaries. (AP)

Several Israeli tanks raided the northern Gaza Strip. "We are trying to stop cells from going into these areas and carrying out rocket attacks," an IDF spokesman said. He added later that militants had fired one rocket into southern Israel after the tanks entered. (Reuters)

Palestinian police guarding a Roman Catholic church in Nablus exchanged fire with assailants and chased them away. Churches in the West Bank and Gaza have been attacked with firebombs and gunfire in recent days as part of a Muslim uproar over remarks by Pope Benedict XVI a week earlier, which were viewed as insulting to Islam. Police guards were posted at churches in the West Bank and Gaza after the first spate of attacks.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage to the church. (AP)

Speaking to reporters after talks with President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo, PA President Abbas said: "Unfortunately, after this agreement was signed there were regressions from it ... and unfortunately we are back to point zero, and we will examine the issue anew". "Upon his [Mr. Abbas'] arrival, I hope talks would begin or resume from the point that had been reached before Abbas went to the United States," Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad told the *Voice of Palestine* radio. The next day, PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said in a statement: "we are going to resume talks on the formation of a national unity government. We have serious intentions to make it succeed, and we hope that the talks will resume soon." (AP, Reuters, Xinhua)

24

Three Palestinians, all aged about 15, were wounded by Israeli gunfire in the village of Al-Khader near Bethlehem. One was reportedly seriously injured. An IDF spokesman confirmed to AFP that there had been an incident in which Israeli soldiers had fired at three Palestinians "who were throwing stones at Israeli vehicles and who were getting ready to throw petrol bombs". (AFP)

Mushier al-Masri, Hamas spokesman and PLC member, said, "All factions have agreed on the [Prisoners'] Document as a clear reference which didn't include recognition of the occupation and maintained national principles." Abu Abeer, a spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees,

speaking on behalf of the Committees and three other groups in Gaza City, said: "we consider any [Palestinian] government that recognizes Israel as a legitimate target. We will fight against it by all means, and we will deal with it as an entity linked to the occupation." (AP, Xinhua)

Portland Trust, a London-based organization that studies the Palestinian economy, published a poll showing that PA civil servants, unpaid for six months, had accumulated an average personal bank debt of \$2,000. Only 13 per cent said they had another source of income, while three fourths borrowed from friends and more than half from relatives, especially as banks stopped granting loans in May 2006 because of the mounting debt. Many are behind on school tuition for their children and one-fourth of the smokers have quit or cut back to save money. Thirty per cent were doing without a cell phone. Based on face-to-face interviews of 150 government employees conducted in August, the survey had an error margin of 4 per cent. The average salary of those questioned was NIS2,800 (\$650).

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, speaking at a meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister's Middle East envoy, Wajid Khan, said it was important to reach an agreement on the principles that would determine the form of the settlement of the Palestinian problem, as mere talks on the Road Map without pinpointing the end of this road or the time frame of the peace process was not enough. (Xinhua)

Tayssir Khaled, member of PLO Executive Committee, said that the latest settlement expansion was an attempt by the Israeli Government "to conciliate the radical right wing and settlers after the big failure in the war in Lebanon." (Xinhua)

In an interview with Egypt's *Mehouar* satellite TV, PA President Abbas said that as part of any deal for the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, the PA would seek the release of Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and PFLP leader Ahmad Sa'adat. Officials in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office reacted negatively, saying, "he [Mr. Abbas] can forget it." (AFP, The Jerusalem Post)

25

Israel lifted a blanket closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the Jewish New Year holiday ended, the IDF said. (AP, Ha'aretz)

An Israeli female soldier was wounded when Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired two Qassam rockets at the Negev town of Sderot. Several residents were treated for anxiety following the attack, in which one of the rockets hit a crowded area in the centre of the city. The attack also disrupted electrical power in parts of the city. Israeli Trade Minister Eli Yishai, a Shas party member, said that Israel should raze Palestinian villages in the Gaza Strip to stop militants there from firing rockets. The Saraya al-Quds, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, had claimed responsibility for the rocket fire. (AFP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

An Israeli military court decided to hold 21 PLC members from Hamas in prison until their trial was over. Earlier in the month, the court ordered the lawmakers freed on bail, noting that the men were permitted to compete in January parliamentary elections and had served in the PA Government for months before being arrested. However, the military prosecutor's office appealed that ruling, and the court reversed itself, saying that the prosecution had evidence that supported its claims that the legislators belonged to an outlawed terrorist group. (DPA)

The EU said it had begun paying €270 (\$346) to 40,000 needy Palestinian families, identified as those who received social welfare from the previous PA Government, the European Commission said in a [statement](#). This came on top of spending for 11,500 health workers, who were no longer paid, and pensioners. The Commission's spokeswoman Emma Udwin told reporters that the cash had been disbursed by Palestinian banks, and added, "we have taken yet another step in fulfilling promises when the Temporary International Mechanism was launched." (AFX, AP, europa.eu)

Seventy-one Israeli university lecturers, writers and reserve officers signed a petition calling on Prime Minister Olmert to open contacts with Syria and the Palestinians, including Hamas. Among the signatories were well-known writers Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, as well as Aaron Ciechanover, who won the Nobel prize for chemistry in 2004, former Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat, and Gen. Shlomo Gazit (Ret.), a former head of military intelligence. The petition was delivered to Mr. Olmert and five Cabinet Ministers, said Naphtali Raz, a teacher behind the initiative. (AFP, AP)

PA President Abbas delayed talks with Hamas aimed at breaking a stalemate over forming a unity government. Mr. Abbas's aides had said that the President was expected to travel to Gaza on 26 September for talks with Hamas leaders, including Prime Minister Haniyeh. (Reuters)

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf called for the world to urgently address the Palestinian issue, saying it lay at the root of all conflicts between the West and the Muslim world. Addressing the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, he said: "the root of all of them, whether Iraq or Afghanistan or Lebanon, lies in Palestine. I think we should fight at solving Palestine first." (AFP)

26

Two Qassam rockets landed in the Negev, damaging two vehicles. No injuries were reported. In the central Gaza Strip, a bomb exploded next to an IDF patrol. (Ha'aretz)

A Palestinian was shot and injured by IDF troops in Nablus, medical sources said. In Jenin and Hebron, eight Palestinians were arrested by soldiers. (Wafa)

Palestinian security forces discovered two underground tunnels along the Gaza Strip border with Egypt that they suspect were dug to smuggle weapons and other contraband. The tunnels were dug 25 metres underground and reached into Egypt. Security forces prepared to seal the tunnel later in the day. (Ha'aretz)

Hundreds of police officers who had not received their salaries for the past six months protested in the northern Gaza Strip, burning tires, firing in the air and blocking roads, witnesses said. All police stations were closed on the second day of the strike. Responding to the protesters, acting PA Finance Minister Samir Abu Aisah promised all public employees earning under \$450 a month that they would receive one salary payment within the next 24 hours. This group was estimated at some 61,000 out of a total of 165,000 civil servants. (DPA, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas cancelled a meeting with Prime Minister Haniyeh. According to Hanna Amira, senior Fatah member, President Abbas would not be going to the Gaza Strip because Hamas had not honoured the agreement reached between the President and the Prime Minister earlier this month. Rawhi Fatouh, former PLC Speaker and member of Fatah's Central Committee, would arrive in Gaza City to meet with Prime Minister Haniyeh and Hamas members "to try to iron out differences and reach an agreement," according to Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh. It was also announced that Mr. Abbas planned to meet Mr. Haniyeh later in the week. (AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice suggested that internal divisions within Hamas could be the key to ending the stalemate in the Middle East peace process. In a series of interviews with New York newspapers, Ms. Rice blamed the Damascus-based Hamas members for blocking the latest efforts to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. She also said "It is not clear to me how much leeway Hamas in the territories has, vis-à-vis Hamas in Damascus. I think the evidence is accumulating that it is not much." (AFP)

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said: "there must be unconditional acceptance throughout the entire Arab world ... of Israel's right to exist in peace and security behind recognized borders. The entire Arab world – including Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas and, in addition, Iran – must give up forever the idea that the Israelis can be driven into the sea." Israel would also have to accept a Palestinian State for the troubled region to make progress, he said. (DPA)

Syria's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Walid Al-Moualelem, told the General Assembly: "we support the efforts of our Palestinian brothers to unite their ranks and encourage them to form a government of national unity." (SANA, UN News Centre)

John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, told the Human Rights Council that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory had deteriorated since 2001, and had become intolerable, appalling, and tragic for ordinary Palestinians. (UN News Centre)

Egypt called on Hamas to release captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit and cooperate fully with PA President Abbas in forming a national unity government in a "strongly worded" letter from Egypt's Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman to Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal, PA officials and Arab diplomats said on condition of anonymity. "The leadership has received the Egyptian letter today and is studying it," a Hamas official told AP. (AP)

Sixty-seven percent of Israeli respondents would support holding negotiations with a PA unity government that included Hamas, according to the results of a joint Palestinian-Israeli poll conducted by the Truman Institute of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah. Fifty-six per cent of Israelis said they would support negotiations with the current PA Government, while 43 per cent opposed such a move. Fifty-nine per cent of Palestinians supported negotiations between Israel and the PA and 38 per cent opposed such a move. (Ha'aretz, <http://truman.huji.ac.il>)

27

Israeli aircraft bombed a house in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah, killing a 14-year-old girl and wounding 14 people, Rafah hospital officials said. The IDF said that the house had been hiding the entrance to a tunnel used to smuggle weapons and that the owners had been given advance warning of the air strike in a telephone call. (AP, DPA)

Israeli settlers from "Kiryat Arba" razed 65 dunums of arable land in Hebron. (Wafa)

Israeli authorities said they had foiled a suicide bombing plot when IDF troops raided Nablus and arrested two militants, who after a brief interrogation led them to a 10-kg explosive belt. During the arrest raid, local gunmen opened fire and threw explosives at the force, which responded and shot four militants, an IDF spokeswoman said. (DPA)

The IDF arrested seven Palestinians and seized a house in Hebron. Twenty Palestinians were arrested in the vicinity of Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip; eight arrests were made in Qabatiya in the West Bank. (Wafa)

The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees said that it had launched two homemade projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. Also, the Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for firing a homemade projectile at the Israeli city of Ashkelon.

(Ma'an News Agency)

Egyptian security forces destroyed a tunnel near Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) crossing, less than five kms from the Rafah Terminal, that had been used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip. (AP)

An Israeli military court ordered the release of the PA Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Al-Shaer. Under the court order, he must stay out of Ramallah for two weeks. (AP)

Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter was quoted as telling a Cabinet meeting: "the response of the defence establishment to the [Qassam] threat is insufficient and we need to take tougher steps." (AFP)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres accused Hamas' exiled leadership of blocking a deal for the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. (AP)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz said in an interview with *The Jerusalem Post*: "We intend to stop the Qassams at any price.... Hamas knows that they will pay a heavy price with every Qassam fired at Israel. And if they do not stop them, they know we will consider harsher and deeper operations into Gaza." (The Jerusalem Post)

Spain's Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said, in an article published by the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*: "in my opinion, the role of the European Union and the United States should lead to a revival of the Quartet, which could incorporate the added value of some key countries from the region, thus multiplying the Quartet's capacity to bring a new chance to the peace process. It may be timely for all the stakeholders to meet again, as they did in 1991, to re-affirm their commitment to seeking a global solution". (Al-Hayat)

An Israeli court handed down a verdict on a Jewish settler, Asher Weisgan, of four life sentences for killing four Palestinians in the West Bank on 17 August 2005 during Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He had known his victims personally, workers at the "Shilo" settlement, and was giving three of them a lift home from work when he snatched a security guard's gun and opened fire. (BBC, Ha'aretz)

B'Tselem, an Israeli Human Rights Organization, published a report entitled "Act of Vengeance" on the effects of Israel's bombing of the Gaza power plant on 28 June 2006. The report concluded that Israel's bombing of the plant constituted a war crime. The report showed that most residents of the Gaza Strip continued to be cut off from electricity for half of every day, with wide-ranging, adverse affects. The lack of electricity harmed the health care provided to the residents; most city dwellers were supplied with water only two or three hours a day; the sewage system was approaching crisis level; people with limited mobility living in high-rise buildings suffered from the lack of functioning elevators; and the lack of refrigeration potentially subjected residents to food poisoning. Small businesses reliant on a regular power supply had been badly affected. The problems resulting from the lack of a steady supply of electricity were exacerbated by the poor economic conditions in the area. B'Tselem determined that the bombing of the power plant was illegal and defined as a war crime in International Humanitarian Law, as the attack was aimed at a purely civilian object. It also was an act of collective punishment. Although the bombing followed the abduction of an IDF soldier, Gilad Shalit, and the firing of Qassam rockets at Israeli communities, there was no apparent military basis for the action, and it seemed that its intention was to satisfy a desire for revenge, the report said. (www.btselem.org)

28

Israeli aircraft overnight carried out a missile attack in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, destroying a home belonging to a Hamas member. There were no casualties. The army said the local population had been warned before the attack to keep away from structures "used by terrorist organizations for storing weaponry." (AFP, Wafa)

Israeli forces arrested nine Palestinians in the West Bank. In the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, forces arrested a 20-year-old woman who Israeli sources said had intended to carry out a bombing operation in Israel, as well as a Palestinian man. Israeli forces also arrested five Palestinians in Jenin and two in Bethlehem. (Ma'an News Agency, Wafa)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said he hoped to meet with PA President Abbas in the coming days. "I am exerting a great effort in order to start a dialogue with Abu Mazen [Mr. Abbas]," he said in an interview with public radio. "I have told him that I am ready to meet him. I do not set any conditions [for the meeting] but do not accept that conditions are imposed on me," he said. In a second interview broadcast on army radio, Mr. Olmert ruled out the release of Palestinian prisoners as a pre-condition for the freedom of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. (AFP, AFP, Reuters)

Shin Bet security service chief Yuval Diskin raised the issue of arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip during a Cabinet meeting. Mr. Diskin said that since the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, an estimated 19 tons of military grade explosives have been smuggled into Gaza from Sinai. He said that the Egyptian authorities were aware of the ongoing smuggling, and they had even known the smugglers' identities; yet they had avoided taking any action against them, even when Israel had made specific requests for the detention of key individuals. Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the Cabinet that he intended to raise the issue of Palestinian arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she visits Israel next week. (Ha'aretz)

The Palestinian Government paid partial salaries to 165,000 civil servants who had not received their full wages in months. The payments of \$350 (€275) came from money donated by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, acting PA Finance Minister Samir Abu Eisha told a press conference. (AP)

A diplomatic source told *AFP* that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 4 October during a 24-hour stopover as part of a tour to the region, including Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. (*AFP*)

In her statement to the second session of the Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour announced she would soon have the opportunity to visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to conduct a first-hand assessment of the situation. (*AFP, DPA, www.ohchr.org*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said in a report published on the sixth anniversary of the intifada that the Israeli army had killed 4,348 Palestinians between the beginning of the uprising in September 2000 and the end of July 2006. According to the report, 2,372 had been killed in clashes with Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip, 1,940 had been killed in the West Bank, and the remaining 36 had been killed in Israel. The deaths included 847 minors aged under 18, the report said. (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency*)

Two US Congressmen accused the United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East of allegedly distributing funds to members of terrorist organizations. Representatives Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) lambasted UNRWA for allegedly appropriating money to employ members of Hamas and for distributing funds to Palestine refugees with connections to terrorist groups. In a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Congressman called for "stricter oversight" of the more than \$100 million in U.S. foreign aid provided to United Nations humanitarian programmes each year. (*Ha'aretz*)

The negotiations for the release of the abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit were not progressing, according to sources involved in the mediation. The sources said that there had been no agreement between Israel and Hamas on the basic principles of an exchange deal that would involve the release of Mr. Shalit and Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. While it was clear to both sides that a prisoner exchange would have to take place as part of the deal, there was no agreement on the number of Palestinians that would be released in return for Mr. Shalit. There was also no progress on the timing and the form of such an exchange, the sources said. (*Ha'aretz*)

29

Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinian teenaged brothers in the northern Gaza Strip. The attack occurred in a field near the town of Beit Hanoun, which had often been used as a staging base for rocket attacks on Israel. Palestinian hospital officials said that the two boys, Anwar Hamdan, 16, and Hamam Hamdan, 14, were riding bicycles to inspect the rocket launchers in the field when they were killed in the Israeli attack. The Israeli army said that soldiers had hit two Palestinians who had come to the area to collect the launchers used to fire rockets over the past week. (*AP, Reuters*)

An Israeli aircraft fired a missile into the home of an armed Hamas member in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian witnesses said. The Israeli army had no immediate comment. It was unclear if there were any casualties. The witnesses said that the occupants of the house had been told by telephone to evacuate the building minutes before the attack. (*Reuters*)

A total closure of the Palestinian territories ordered by the Israeli Defence Ministry ahead of Yom Kippur was due to come into effect today. "The total closure on the Palestinian territories will come into effect on Friday after the Muslim prayers and will last until Monday evening at the end of Yom Kippur," a Defence Ministry spokeswoman said. (*AFP*)

Efforts to form a Palestinian unity government were in jeopardy over entrenched differences with Hamas, said Maher Miqdad, a Fatah party spokesman. He said: "talk of a national unity government is not serious now". PA President Abbas said, while on a visit to Qatar: "I cannot say that there has been progress in any sense". (*AFP*)

Tens of thousands of Palestinians marched through the town of Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip to show their support for Hamas. "The aim of this demonstration is to send a message to the world and to those in our society that the Palestinian people are standing with their elected government.

They are rejecting the unjust and unfair siege and all attempts to carry out an internal coup against this government," said Hamas lawmaker Mushir al-Masri. He said that Hamas remained committed to forming the coalition. "We are going to move ahead with the president, because there is no choice," he said. (*AP*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is to embark on a tour of the Middle East next week, was expected to hold a conference with moderate Arab leaders in Riyadh where Ms. Rice would seek to reach understandings on efforts to block the Iranian nuclear programme, along with ways of possibly moving forward on the Palestinian issue. (*Ha'aretz*)

In Geneva, John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel since 1967, told the Human Rights Council that Israel was guilty of "collective punishment" of the Palestinian people through its military actions in the Gaza Strip. He said that Israel had been engaged in a "brutal military operation" in Gaza since 25 June. Mr. Dugard had been tasked on 6 July with leading a fact-finding mission to Gaza but was refused entry by Israel, officials here said. (*AFP*)

Defence for Children International-Palestine Section (DCI/PS) said that 2006 was the bloodiest year for Palestinian children since the beginning of the Israeli Occupation in 1967. In a press release, DCI/PS said it was invited to address the forty-third session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to discuss the violation of Palestinian children's rights by Israel. In its oral statement, DCI/PS focused mainly on the situation for children in Gaza under the current Israeli offensive operation "Summer Rains", which began on 28 June 2006. It highlighted a notable trend from the data tracked by DCI/PS suggesting that if the death rate among Palestinian children continued to rise at its current trajectory, 2006 risked being the bloodiest year for Palestinian children since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967. (*www.dci-pal.org*)

30

An Israeli air strike in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah killed two armed Palestinians and wounded three people. Medical officials said that two members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were killed. Two people were seriously wounded, and a six-year-old boy was wounded in the legs. The Israeli army said it had targeted a vehicle carrying a group of militants involved in attacks on Israel, but witnesses said that the missile struck a group of pedestrians. (*AP*)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a rocket into Israel, wounding two Israelis, a military official said. The homemade rocket hit a house in Sderot, said the official. (*AFP*)

Five people were wounded in Deir el-Balah in the Gaza Strip when a Hamas affiliated Palestinian tossed a hand grenade into a demonstration by policemen protesting non-payment of salaries, security sources said. (*AFP*)

Thousands of government employees and security officials filled the streets of Gaza burning tires, blocking roads and firing in the air to protest delays and complications in receiving salaries. The protesters closed the main road between Gaza City and Khan Yunis, affecting movement between Gaza City and the southern Gaza Strip. Outside Rafah City, protesters threw stones at the vehicle of Attalah Abu Sabh, PA Minister of Culture, breaking its windows. (*AP*)

The Hamas-led Cabinet sent its 3,500-member Hamas security forces into Gaza's streets to quash PA employee demonstrations. Hamas had set up its forces - which answers to the Interior Ministry - after losing control of the Palestinian security forces. (*Ha'aretz*)
