

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

Monthly media monitoring review

December 2009

Monthly highlights

- General Assembly adopts resolutions on Palestine question and Middle East situation ([2 December](#))
- EU calls for Jerusalem to become the future capital of two States ([8 December](#))
- A \$664-million 2010 consolidated humanitarian appeal for the Palestinians launched ([9 December](#))
- Israel designates settlements "national priority zones" eligible for special financing ([13 December](#))
- A arrest warrant issued by the UK against former Israeli Foreign Minister Livni on war crimes charges ([15 December](#))
- Israel announces plans to build 700 more homes in East Jerusalem settlements ([28 December](#))

1

The Israeli military said that it had detained three "wanted" Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank. Israeli forces detained seven Palestinians from Bethlehem and Hebron, Palestinian police said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Haaretz said that it had obtained a copy of a draft document authored by Sweden, the current holder of the rotating European Union (EU) presidency, in which EU Foreign Ministers were expected to officially call for the division of Jerusalem, to serve as the capitals of both Israel and Palestine and implying that the EU would recognize a unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood. The [EU Foreign Affairs Council] is scheduled to meet in Brussels on 7 and 8 December. "The process being led by Sweden harms the European Union's ability to take part as a significant mediator in the political process between Israel and the Palestinians," the Israeli Foreign Ministry said in a statement. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, occupied the house of Rifka Al-Kurd in the Sheikh Jarrah area in East Jerusalem, producing a court order which authorized them to take over the house. The Jerusalem police detained five protesters, which included two foreigners, two Israelis, and an Arab. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Richard Miron, spokesperson for the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, told the press outside the East Jerusalem house occupied by settlers: "The Secretary-General has expressed his dismay at the continuation of demolitions, evictions and the instalment of Israeli settlers in Palestinian neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem. Provocative actions, such as these, create inevitable tensions, undermine trust, often have tragic human consequences and make resuming negotiations and achieving a two-State solution more difficult. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for these actions to cease immediately". (www.unsco.org)

Dozens of settlers from "Kiryat Arba" clashed with inspectors who attempted to halt construction and confiscate tools, forcing the settlers to leave the area. The settlers said that the work under way had been authorized and that it had begun several months ago. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that his 10-month partial freeze on new housing in settlements in the West Bank was a one-time measure that would not be extended. (*AP*)

Hamas told *Al-Hayat* newspaper that dispute remained over 50 prisoners, while there had been agreement on 400 names as part of the first phase of a prisoner exchange deal with Israel. (*Ynetnews*)

The General Assembly [concluded](#) its annual debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, during which several delegations had urged the international community to end six decades of "collective failure" to resolve the Palestine question through a peaceful settlement. (*UN press release GA/10895*)

2

An Israeli army spokesperson said that Israeli troops had fired on a "suspicious Palestinian man" who had approached the Gaza fence and ignored warning shots. The man was treated at the scene and then transferred to a hospital. The spokesperson declined to say whether the man had been armed. (*AFP*)

Israeli soldiers beat a 75-year-old Palestinian as he was trying to access his land west of Deir al-Ghusun in the northern West Bank and left him bleeding at the scene. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Yasser Sabri Radi, a senior member of the armed wing of Hamas, died in a tunnel collapse in the central Gaza Strip, according to a statement by Hamas. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces carried out a wide-scale detention campaign east of Jenin overnight, targeting young men in the village of Deir Abu Da'if. The Israeli military said that 15 Palestinians had been arrested, of whom 13 were released the following day. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Egyptian security services raided an explosives cache near the Rafah border with Gaza, confiscating two belts lined with explosives, six bombs and

five unspecified explosive materials, according to Egyptian security sources. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli human rights group, the HaMoked Centre for the Defence of the Individual [said](#) that Israel had stripped Palestinians of Jerusalem residency status in 2008 at a faster rate than at any time in history. According to statistics that HaMoked obtained from the Israeli Ministry of Interior, 4,577 residents of East Jerusalem had their residency revoked in 2008, compared with a total of 8,500 revocations during the 40 years from 1967 to 2007. (*Reuters, www.hamoked.org.il*)

Israel approved the construction of 84 buildings in settlements in the West Bank. Coordinator of Government Activities in the [Palestinian] Territories, Maj. Gen. Eitan Dangoth, gave official approval for the move after the political echelon had authorized the list of buildings. (*Haaretz*)

Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak announced that minor renovation projects in settlements would be authorized, pending the approval by settlement mayors. According to *Haaretz*, the relaxation of the temporary ban would allow projects, such as enclosing balconies or building pergolas over a porch, to move forward. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Knesset had rejected a bill which would ban visits by families and lawyers of Hamas prisoners held in Israel, Israel Radio reported. Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch said that the bill violated due process and also contradicted Israel's obligations according to international law. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The spokesperson for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza, Adnan Abu Hasna said: "There is an unprecedented deficit in the UNRWA budget and our balance has hit zero for the first time since our establishment 60 years ago. ... If this deficit continues and if donors do not increase their assistance to UNRWA, we may have to cut back on some of the programmes we provide for refugees in the entire Middle East, not only in Gaza and the West Bank". (*AFP*)

The General Assembly took action on four draft resolutions under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine". The draft resolution entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" ([A/64/L.20](#)) was adopted [as resolution 64/16] with 109 votes in favour, 8 against and 55 abstentions; the draft entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat" ([A/64/L.21](#)) was adopted [as resolution 64/17] with 112 votes in favour, 9 against and 54 abstentions; the draft entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" ([A/64/L.22](#)) was adopted [as resolution 64/18] with 162 votes in favour, 8 against and 5 abstentions; and the draft entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" ([A/64/L.23](#)) was adopted [as resolution 64/19] with 164 votes in favour, 7 against and 4 abstentions. The Assembly also took action on the draft resolutions considered under agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East". The draft resolution entitled "Jerusalem" ([A/64/L.24](#)) was adopted [as resolution 64/20] with 163 votes, 7 against and 5 abstentions. (*UN press release GA/10896*)

3

Three Israeli tanks and a bulldozer had invaded the southern Gaza Strip east of the Sufa crossing point, near Rafah, witnesses reported. An Israeli military spokesperson said that the report would be investigated. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli military seized 15 Palestinian civilians during raids in Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus and in West Bank villages. (*IMEMC*)

US President Obama notified Secretary of State Clinton of his decision to delay moving the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. A 1995 US law recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and ordered that the embassy be relocated there. However, the law also permits the President to delay the move for six-month periods, based on national security grounds. (*AP*)

The Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported that the United Arab Emirates had donated \$2.5 million to UNRWA. (*WAM*)

The [Land Research Centre](#) reported that during 2009, the Israeli authorities had uprooted 7,000 olive trees in the West Bank, 1,455 of which had been uprooted during the olive-picking season. (*IMEMC*)

"Yesha Council" settler leaders met with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv for two hours to discuss the settlement construction freeze. Settler representatives who attended the meeting said that the Prime Minister had told them that he wanted to prove to the world that Israel was not opposed to peace and promised them that construction would resume after 10 months. Mr. Netanyahu had been expected to tell the settlers that he intended to stand by the decision but would be willing to consider relief measures on matters that would not violate the Government's decision. Yesha Council Chairman Danny Dayan said that they had reiterated their no-negotiations stance and that they would continue resisting the freeze order. In the West Bank, settlers blocked inspectors from entering a settlement to search for unauthorized construction, during the third straight day of such confrontations. There was no violence but authorities made at least four arrests. (*The Washington Post, Ynetnews*)

Fourteen local settler councils in the West Bank filed a petition with the Israeli High Court of Justice against IDF Central Command Chief Avi Mizrahi, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a motion to revoke the settlement freeze orders. (*Ynetnews*)

The Palestinian Prisoners' Society reported that Israeli soldiers continuously tried to humiliate the families of Palestinian detainees imprisoned by Israel and denied them visitation rights when they refused to be strip-searched; in addition, they had insulted and attacked them. (*IMEMC*)

The spokesperson for the Popular Resistance Committees, Abu Mujahid, denied reports that the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit had been transferred to Egypt as a step towards a prisoner exchange. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Jordan summoned Israeli Ambassador Nevo Dani to demand a halt to "unilateral" work by Israel on the outer walls of Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre. "The Ambassador was summoned today to the Foreign Ministry where he was handed an official letter of protest expressing deep concerns and rejection of unilateral measures in the outer western walls of the church", a senior official said. The Jordanian Government demanded that Israel immediately halt such actions and restore the status quo. (*AFP, The Jordan Times*)

4

Israeli forces shot a 19-year-old Palestinian with a live bullet during a weekly anti-wall protest in the village of Ni'lin. An Israeli military spokesperson confirmed that soldiers had fired a "tutu bullet", which he said was intended for "exceptionally violent rioters". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a news conference in Brussels: "We agreed in the UN Security Council and within the Quartet framework and with the parties in conflict that the Moscow Conference would be convened immediately after the resumption of direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. ... The well-known decision of the Israeli Government to freeze construction in the settlements for the next 10 months was a step in the right direction but clearly inadequate for the resumption of negotiations. ... With regard to recognition of the State of Palestine, Russia has recognized that State. ... So in this respect, we have no problem". (*www.mid.ru*)

PA President Abbas would depart next week on a tour of Arab countries seeking support for efforts to establish a State unilaterally, Palestinian sources said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities informed Palestinian crossing officials that all transfer points with Gaza would be closed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The first Stockholm Human Rights Award was given to South African Justice Richard Goldstone, who had earlier headed the UN Fact-finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, in recognition of his “outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers from “Yizhar” attacked the West Bank village of Assirah Al-Qibliyah, south-west of Nablus, Ghassan Daghlal, the PA official monitoring settler activity in the northern West Bank, told *Arab News*. (www.arabnews.com)

A team headed by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Minister [without portfolio] Ze'ev Benjamin Begin would monitor the implementation of the Cabinet's decision to freeze construction in settlements, the Prime Minister's Office reported. (*Haaretz, Ynetnews*)

“We back and support the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails and we are supporting the finalization of the prisoners' swap deal, but we don't support deporting [a] large number of prisoners”, Saeb Erakat, head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, was quoted as saying.

He denied reports that the US had put pressure on Israel not to go through with the deal because it would weaken PA President Abbas.

(*Haaretz*)

New York City human rights advocates demonstrated in front of the Leviev jewellery store on Madison Avenue, demanding a boycott of Leviev's companies because of their alleged involvement in Israeli settlement construction. (*Wafa*)

5

Egyptian security services raided a tunnel and two storehouses holding goods to be smuggled through tunnels into the Gaza Strip in Rafah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

“Establishing a Palestinian State is part of the Arab Peace Initiative ... and it is in Jordan's interest”, Jordan's Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh told a news conference following a meeting in Ramallah with PA President Abbas. He said that he had conveyed a message from King Abdullah II to Mr. Abbas, reflecting the ongoing coordination between Jordan and the PA on the establishment of a future Palestinian State. (*Xinhua*)

Mohammad An-Nahal, a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, warned that “the UNRWA financial crisis will not only affect the services offered to the more than 4 million [Palestine] refugees but also the cause of [Palestine] refugees”. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

6

Palestinians threw stones at Israeli vehicles near Bethlehem and Qalqilya. (*Ynetnews*)

Islamic Jihad said that a leader in its military wing had survived an assassination attempt near Jenin. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said that during his upcoming visit to the Russian Federation, “We will ask for Russian support for our efforts seeking UN Security Council recognition of a Palestinian State on all territories which Israel occupied in 1967”. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

“The committee was invited by the Egyptian leadership to resume consultations on how to move forward with the reconciliation efforts”, said Hasan Abdo, a member of a delegation from the Palestinian Reconciliation Committee upon arrival in Cairo. He explained that his committee had held meetings with representatives from Hamas and Fatah. Egypt intended to propose a new [amendment] to the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation plan, focusing on disputed points, and would ask both sides to either accept or refuse the plan as a whole, according to *Al-Yaum*, a Saudi Arabian newspaper. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During a working lunch with EU Ambassadors, Jordan's King Abdullah II called on European countries to place more pressure on Israel to halt its unilateral measures in East Jerusalem, saying that these measures sought to change the identity of the city by forcing Muslims and Christians to leave their homes and lands and threatened Islamic and Christian holy places. He commended the efforts of Sweden to forge a unified European stance that recognized East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State. (*The Jordan Times*)

“The Palestinians are guests in Lebanon until our question is resolved. We will not accept any homeland other than Palestine”, PA President Abbas said in an interview. “There is no solution in the Middle East without a solution to the issue of Palestine refugees under the Arab [Peace Initiative] and UN resolution 194”, he added. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers widened their protests against their country's temporary construction freeze by shooting at a Palestinian home, torching and stoning vehicles and assaulting Israeli officers. Israeli police arrested at least two settlers accused of trying to block security officers from enforcing the freeze. (*Reuters*)

“This is a one-time and temporary decision, not a [settlement] freeze of unlimited and infinite duration”, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting. (www.pmo.gov.il)

The World Bank gave \$64 million to the PA. A World Bank official, Shamshad Akhtar, said that the goal was to support the plan of PA Prime Minister Fayyad, who signed the agreement with the Bank, to set up institutions for a State within two years. (*AP*)

7

Israeli forces detained five Palestinians in the West Bank overnight, the army said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A West Bank-based Hamas lawmaker, Mahmoud al-Ramahi, denied that his movement had launched a secret and direct dialogue with Israel.

(*Xinhua*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal arrived in Sana'a, Yemen. Mr. Mashaal said that he would brief Yemen's President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, about the latest developments in the Palestinian arena and Palestinian reconciliation efforts. (*SABA Yemen News Agency*)

The Israeli Government refused a request by Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin to visit the Gaza Strip in order to assess the humanitarian situation there. In Dublin, a Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson said the trip [to the region] had been called off because of that rejection. (*The Irish Times*)

“Developments in East Jerusalem in 2009 were marked by the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and a considerable number of Palestinian house demolitions and eviction orders,” said a confidential EU report obtained by AFP. It cited the almost-impossible-to-obtain building permits for Palestinian residents and inferior municipal services. “Israel is, by practical means, actively pursuing its illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by weakening the Palestinian community in the city, impeding Palestinian urban development and ultimately separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank”. (*AFP*)

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said that the EU initiative to support the status of East Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian State “could hurt efforts to resume [peace] negotiations”. (*Haaretz*)

Foreign Minister of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn said at the opening of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels: “If [East Jerusalem] is occupied, it does not belong to Israel”. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, for his part, said that the EU should not decide on the fate of Jerusalem without proper negotiations. (*AFP*)

8

Israeli forces detained a Palestinian man at the “Etzion” settlement, south of Bethlehem. The man was allegedly found in possession of a grenade and a knife. Additionally, the Israeli military said it had detained 11 Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas told reporters during a visit to Beirut: “If Hamas persists in its refusal to allow the elections to take place in Gaza, I will not agree to the vote in the West Bank”. Mr. Abbas also said that he stood by his decision not to stand for re-election as President. “I have not changed

my mind and this decision is neither a manoeuvre, nor a tactic, nor a joke”, he said. He added that the Central Council of the PLO would meet on 15 December to decide on the elections. (AFP)

In the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels, the EU Foreign Ministers said, “The European Union will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties... . The Council recalls that it has never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States”. (www.consilium.europa.eu)

Prime Minister Netanyahu's Government has an undeclared de facto policy of not letting senior political figures, such as foreign ministers, enter the Gaza Strip from Israel. The policy came to light after Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin told a parliamentary committee last week that Israel banned a visit he had hoped to make to Gaza. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Palestinian Authority announced a boycott of products made in the West Bank settlements. Economics Minister Hassan Abu Libdeh said that the Palestinian Authority had already confiscated products worth \$1 million, including food, cosmetics and hardware, and the goal was to eliminate all settlement-made goods from Palestinian store shelves next year. (AP)

Rights groups and the Palestinian Authority accused the Hamas-backed authorities in Gaza of barring Palestinian patients from leaving the territory for medical treatment. (Ma'an News Agency)

A Palestinian source told the Ma'an News Agency that the refurbishment of gas lines at the Kerem Shalom crossing had been completed. Israeli authorities opened the Kerem Shalom and Nahal Oz crossings into the Gaza Strip, while Karni remained closed, a Palestinian crossings official said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel said that it was treating five suspected swine flu cases from Gaza in hopes of containing an outbreak of the virus there. The move was a rare loosening of the tight blockade Israel had imposed on Gaza. (AP)

9

Israeli forces arrested 14 Palestinians in Nablus and Hebron. In Nablus they seized several leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The IDF also reported that three improvised grenades had been uncovered on three Palestinian men at a checkpoint east of Nablus. According to eyewitnesses, Israeli forces detained a Palestinian man carrying pipe bombs at the Qalandiya checkpoint. At the same time, a 13-year-old Palestinian youth, armed with a knife, was arrested at the “Revava” settlement. (Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, www.idf.il, IMEMC, Wafa)

The IDF reported that a “riot” had erupted during a protest against the separation wall in the area of N'lin. Seventy Israelis, Palestinians and foreign citizens were hurling rocks at the Israeli forces. (www.idf.il)

At a press conference with his visiting PA counterpart, Riad Malki, Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said: “We actively support the work being undertaken by Egypt towards achieving reconciliation among the Palestinians. We contribute to those efforts, and in particular, will continue to work with Hamas”. He added that “the European Union statement [on the Middle East peace process] contains nothing new compared with what has long been enshrined in the... Security Council resolutions, in the Madrid principles and in the statements of the Quartet”. (www.mid.ru)

The Consul General of Sweden in Jerusalem, Nils Eliasson, said that there were very few substantial differences between the EU statement on the Middle East peace process and the original draft submitted by Sweden. Saeb Erakat, head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, welcomed the statement as a “blueprint for the resumption of meaningful negotiations”. (Ma'an News Agency)

High-level IDF officials said that “the Palestinians want to continue to build their State from below and at the same time to work with the United States and the European Union to force Israel into an arrangement from above”. (Haaretz)

Israeli Military Advocate General, Maj. Gen. Avihai Mandelblit, met with US Administration and United Nations officials in New York, briefing them on the IDF investigations into “Operation Cast Lead” in Gaza. The investigations were due to be completed in the coming weeks. (The Jerusalem Post)

Haaretz reported that Egypt had begun the construction of a massive metal wall along its border with the Gaza Strip in a bid to shut down smuggling tunnels into the territory. The wall would be 9-10 km long, and would extend 20-30 metres deep into the ground, Egyptian sources said. (Haaretz)

Prime Minister Netanyahu told a Security Cabinet meeting: “It seems that the Palestinians have adopted a strategy of rejecting negotiations with Israel in order to avoid the demands of Israel and the international community which require compromises on their part. But this is a mistake. There can be no genuine solution without direct negotiations with Israel, in the framework of which we will reach agreements and arrangements between the sides”. (www.pmo.gov.il)

The Knesset overwhelmingly approved amendments to a law requiring a referendum on territorial withdrawals by Israel. According to Knesset Member Yariv Levin (Likud), who chaired the committee that authorized the changes, the existing law demands a referendum on any withdrawal from [what Israel considers as its] territory, and the amendment related to how the referendum would be held, which kind of questions would be posed, how any publicity would be managed and how the vote itself would be conducted. (Haaretz)

A delegation of European Parliament members said they had been denied access to Gaza by Israeli authorities despite earlier assurances the visit could take place. Ireland's Proinsias de Rossa, who headed the delegation, said that entry had been refused on security grounds, and that he was “shocked and dismayed at the interference of the Israeli authorities”. The party of 10 was on a visit to assess the chances of the Middle East peace process and discuss evictions and house demolitions in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem's status and intra-Palestinian reconciliation. (AP)

United Nations humanitarian agencies and other aid organizations had asked donors for \$664 million to aid the Palestinians in 2010. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in the [2010 Consolidated Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory](http://www.unocha.org/2010/consolidatedappeal): “The common humanitarian strategy is supported by 236 projects, including 147 from the NGO community and 89 from UN agencies. The entire population of the Gaza Strip, residents of East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank – including areas near Israeli settlements and in barrier-adjacent areas – have been identified as primary target beneficiaries for humanitarian assistance and protection”. (AP, <http://ochaonline.un.org>)

Thousands of demonstrators gathered in central Jerusalem to protest the settlement freeze. DPA reported that dozens of buses had been transporting settlers from all over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as supporters from elsewhere in Israel to the rally. Additionally,

according to *Haaretz*, several Members of the Knesset and West Bank settlement mayors were among the protesters. (*AP, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

Peace Now said that housing units were being built at a faster rate in West Bank settlements than in the rest of Israel. (*The Jerusalem Post, www.arabnews.com, www.peacenow.org.il*)

The Israeli High Court ruled to uphold the deportation of a student at Bethlehem University to Gaza on the grounds that she had been staying illegally in the West Bank. It also ruled that the body of Mashour Al-Aroui, a Palestinian killed by Israeli troops in 1976, should be released after Israel had kept it for 33 years. The Court rejected a petition requesting that Palestinians from Gaza be allowed to visit relatives in Israeli prisons. (*AFP, IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

10

PA security forces dismantled and destroyed an explosive left behind by the Israeli army in Tubas. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians fired at Israeli Defense Ministry employees working near the fence separating Israel from the Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Egypt denied reports that it was constructing an underground steel barrier along its Gaza border in an attempt to seal off smuggling tunnels built by Palestinians. Egyptian sources told Al-Jazeera that bulldozers and construction workers in the area had been carrying out routine maintenance work, dismissing the Israeli report as "baseless". (*www.aljazeera.net*)

Israeli forces seized Abdullah Abu Rahmah, a member of the Popular Committee against the Wall, in the village of Bil'in, according to PA police. The Israeli military also said it had detained five "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank overnight. The military said a pistol and a homemade explosive device were found in the home of one of the detainees, south of Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency, www.idf.il*)

"Organizing... a conference in Moscow, without preliminary negotiations with Israel, would be pointless", said PA Foreign Minister Riyad Malki at the end of his visit to Moscow. With regard to a recent French proposal to hold peace talks in Paris, Mr. Malki said that "the aims of the French initiative were not contrary to an international conference being held in Moscow". On a forthcoming visit to Moscow in January 2010, PA President Abbas would again "tackle the question of holding an international conference in Moscow, which has already been postponed several times", added the Foreign Minister. (*AFP*)

Foreign Minister Carl Bildt of Sweden, which holds the EU Presidency, warned Israel not to play "divide and rule over the EU position that Jerusalem should be the shared capital of Israel and a future Palestinian State. He said that the decision demonstrated that the EU was a "cohesive and clear force" on global issues, including the Middle East. (*AP, Haaretz*)

During a meeting with visiting European Parliamentarians in the West Bank, Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Abdel-Aziz Dweik called on the Parliamentarians to conduct an international campaign against the illegal Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip and to support the Palestinian people and their elected leadership. (*IMEMC*)

A 56-year-old Palestinian woman from Gaza died in a Gaza hospital of swine flu, bringing the number of swine flu deaths in Gaza to six. Israeli authorities said that they would send up to 40,000 doses of swine flu vaccine to the Gaza Strip. (*AFP, DPA*)

Following clashes between Palestinians and settlers attempting to occupy a Palestinian home in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah area, seven Palestinians were arrested and ordered out of Jerusalem for 45 days. (*IMEMC*)

Israeli Minister without Portfolio Ze'ev Benjamin Begin (Likud) said that "[settlement] construction continues and will continue for the next 10 months". He said that the Government had not decided on a construction freeze in the customary meaning of the term. Mr. Begin went on to say that in the next 10 months the [settler] population of the West Bank would grow by more than 10,000 people. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The British Government advised all supermarket chains in the UK to clearly label any imported products made in the West Bank settlements. The Israeli Foreign Ministry characterized the step as "capitulation to Palestinian organizations". (*Ynetnews*)

Israel allowed Gaza Strip farmers to send a flower-laden truck through the Kerem Shalom crossing point on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel, en route to Europe. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Speaking in East Jerusalem on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, outgoing UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd stressed the need to address the injustices and grievances faced by the dispossessed and the disabled, particularly among the refugees. She concluded by emphasizing: "Peace is possible, but only if we insist on our universal humanity". Ma'an News Agency reported that Israeli police ordered Ms. AbuZayd out of the East Jerusalem home of the Al Kurd family, which had recently been evicted. (*Ma'an News Agency, www.unrwa.org*)

11

Paul Kernaghan, the outgoing head of the EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS), said his vision was "to see the Palestinian Civil Police operating alone on the streets of Palestine". He added: "Such a development would mark a significant achievement in the creation of a viable and stable Palestinian State. I know that vision is shared by many Palestinian colleagues and the general public". (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinians took to the streets in the northern West Bank village of Yasouf after Israeli settlers vandalized and set fire to a mosque there. Soldiers fired tear gas when the crowd arrived near the "Tapuah" settlement. The Israeli military issued a statement condemning the vandalizing of the mosque and that Israeli forces were searching for the perpetrators. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Jack Twiss Quarles van Ufford, the head of the Dutch Representative Office in Ramallah, said that the EU ministerial statement "reconfirms that East Jerusalem is considered occupied territory, like the rest of the West Bank. The parties can agree in negotiations on a different solution, but that's not where we are now", he told Ma'an News Agency in an interview. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian Christian leaders from all denominations met in Bethlehem to declare the occupation a "sin", demand sanctions on Israel and to jointly reject Christian Zionism. The clergy had termed their movement the Palestine Kairos Initiative, modelled after South Africa's 1985 Kairos Document, a theological statement that called on churches to join the fight against apartheid. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

12

A Palestinian farmer was killed in the Gaza Strip when he was caught in the crossfire between militants and Israeli soldiers. (*AFP*)

A 20-year-old Israeli woman was moderately wounded when a Palestinian stabbed her in the back while she was waiting at a bus stop near the "Gush Etzion" settlement near Bethlehem. (*Haaretz*)

13

Militants in Gaza fired two Qassam rockets at Israel, causing no casualties or damage. One rocket exploded in the southern Negev area, while the

second fell inside Gaza. (*Haaretz*)

An Israeli army officer was convicted of beating a Palestinian man during a 2008 military raid in the West Bank village of Kadoum. The army said that a military court convicted Lt. Adam Malul of aggravated assault and of violating the army's code of conduct. He would be sentenced at a later date. (*AP*)

Electricity would be distributed in Gaza just four days a week, for eight hours a day, according to the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company. "Gaza is suffering a 25 per cent shortage of electricity. It is expected that the shortage will increase to 35 per cent because of winter and low temperatures ... as residents use electric heating appliances", the company's spokesperson said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UNRWA handed a Palestinian family a set of keys to its first mud house in Gaza as part of the celebration of its sixtieth anniversary. In the light of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the dire lack of building materials stemming from it, the Agency planned on building such mud houses for all families who had lost their houses during the Israeli offensive. (*Ynetnews*)

The Israeli Cabinet voted to approve a proposal to include settlements in the list of communities designated as "national priority zones", giving them access to credits worth \$41 million, a Government official said. The new credits will benefit 110,000 settlers and can be used for vocational training programmes and other educational or cultural activities. The settlements affected were mainly outside the large settlement blocks that Israel wanted to annex under any peace accord with the Palestinians. Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that the spending plan gave disproportionate weight to the isolated settlements. Among them were "Kiryat Arba" and "Kedumim", settlements deep in the West Bank, where residents had harassed and blocked inspectors sent to enforce the construction moratorium. "There are a number of small settlements that are routinely a source of extreme behaviour," Mr. Barak said, insisting that they should not be rewarded with funds. (*AFP, AP*)

14

Israeli soldiers entered an area in the northern Gaza Strip, near the Erez crossing, and seized two Palestinian boys. One of them was released after several hours while the second remained in custody. (*IMEMC*)

Fatah Central Committee member Nabil Sha'ath said: "I contacted the Egyptian officials and reached the conclusion that efforts reached an impasse in light of Hamas' refusal to sign the Egyptian plan. Hamas' top priority is the prisoner swap negotiations and they will not take any other step before the deal is finalized", Mr. Sha'ath said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Foreign Minister Riyad Malki visited Portugal on the first leg of a Western European tour. Mr. Malki told Voice of Palestine radio he hoped to gather the "most international support possible" for a Security Council resolution establishing the borders of a Palestinian State, including all lands occupied by Israel in the 1967 war and with its capital in East Jerusalem. Mr. Malki was to meet with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner the following day before heading to Spain on 17 December. (*AFP*)

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia said: "In the Palestinian Territories, Australia will contribute \$10 million for essential education and health services for the Palestinian people. Australia's assistance will support the Palestinian Authority to build effective institutions, deliver basic services and improve the effectiveness of its activities. Today's announcement fulfils Australia's \$20 million pledge in March 2009 to assist the Palestinian Authority to meet the recovery and reconstruction needs of the Palestinian people". (www.foreignminister.gov.au)

The United States Agency for International Development announced the transfer of \$75 million in budget support to the PA during a ceremony in Ramallah, which was 50 per cent of the pledged US support to the PA over the coming year. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Al-Jazeera journalist in London reported that an arrest warrant had been issued in a London court against former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni for war crimes that she had allegedly committed during Operation Cast Lead. A British Jewish community website, "Jconline", reported that Ms. Livni had cancelled her visit scheduled for the weekend out of concern that pro-Palestinian lawyers would try to ask for her arrest. She was slated to speak at a Jewish National Funds conference in Hendon, north-west of London. (*Ynetnews*)

15

A Gaza health official said that a tunnel had collapsed under the border with Egypt, killing three Palestinians. (*AP*)

The Israeli military said that it had detained 15 Palestinians overnight in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

IDF sources said that a fifth battalion of PA security forces, trained in Jordan under US sponsorship, would return to the West Bank next week.

Another battalion consisting of several hundred security officers would leave for training in Jordan in January. There were currently already-trained battalions deployed in Nablus, Jenin, Bethlehem and Hebron. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA President Abbas said at a meeting of the PLO Central Council that the Palestinians would seek a Security Council resolution recognizing the borders of a Palestinian State encompassing all lands occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem. "Why are we doing this? Because the negotiations have stopped. Why have they stopped? Because Israel cannot stop the settlements or recognize international law", Mr. Abbas said.

The Council had been convened to decide how to fill a constitutional void once the presidential and parliamentary mandates ran out next month.

Mr. Abbas reiterated his determination not to seek re-election as President and said that he had other options which he would announce at a later date. (*AFP, DPA*)

During a joint press conference with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in Paris, visiting PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said: "Instead of a freeze of [settlement activity], we see a boom of it", emphasizing that the only way to reopen peace negotiations with Israel was "a total freeze of the [settlement] activity". Mr. Kouchner said that "returning to political negotiation" needed "favourable conditions", and then proposed to hold a Paris summit, convening the concerned parties in order to break the deadlock in the Middle East peace process. The two sides also signed a partnership worth more than €200 million (\$292 million), under which France would provide government, infrastructure, education, culture and humanitarian aid over three years. (*Xinhua*)

In addressing the European Parliament, Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy called for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations not for "negotiations' sake but... to achieve a peace deal and turn the page". She added that "negotiations should be based on international law and respect previous agreements. All issues should be on the table including the status of Jerusalem as the future shared capital. They should also take place within an agreed time-frame with effective mediation... The Quartet can provide the careful yet dynamic mediation that is required". She reiterated that "East Jerusalem is occupied territory, together with the rest of the West Bank". (www.europa.eu)

Turkish President Abdullah Gül said that the Palestinian problem was one of the top priorities of Turkey and Egypt, stressing that the two countries had cooperated closely over the issue. Mr. Gül was speaking at a joint press conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak after their talks in Ankara. (*Anatolia News Agency*)

OCHA issued a report entitled "[Restricting space: The planning regime applied by Israel in area C of the West Bank](#)". Under this regime, Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in some 70 per cent of Area C, while in the remaining 30 per cent, restrictions virtually eliminate the possibility of obtaining a building permit, according to the report. Israeli authorities generally allow Palestinian construction only under an Israeli-

approved plan in less than 1 per cent of Area C, much of which is already built up. Palestinians are left with no choice but to build “illegally” and risk demolition and displacement. “The consequences of the current regime are wide-ranging and extend to the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank”, OCHA said in the report. (AFP, www.ochaopt.org)

A Palestinian patient died after he was prevented by the IDF from leaving the Gaza Strip for medical care. (IMEMC)

Israeli intransigence caused a breakdown in negotiations to release an Israeli soldier held by Hamas, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said. Speaking in Tehran, he said that the Israelis had no choice but to free the Palestinian prisoners which Hamas had wanted, if Israel ever wanted to see Gilad Shalit again. (AP)

The Aqsa Foundation for Waqf and Heritage said that large-scale Israeli excavations were being done in the area adjacent to the southern wall of Al-Aqsa mosque, known as the Umayyad Palaces area. (IMEMC)

Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a [statement](#): “Israel rejects the cynical legal move made in the British court against the head of the opposition, Knesset member Tzipi Livni, at the behest of radical elements... . Israel calls on the British Government to fulfil its promises, once and for all, to act in preventing the exploitation of the British legal system by anti-Israel elements against the State of Israel and its citizens”. (www.mfa.gov.il)

The United Nations Human Rights Committee posed 30 highly critical questions to Israel concerning its compliance with the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The list included questions on torture, indefinite detention of prisoners, human shields and medical coercion of Gaza patients at the Erez crossing. (www.reliefweb.int, Wafa)

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued [statement](#) in which it expressed its utmost concern about the continuing illegal settlement activities being carried out by the Government of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The situation with regard to settlement construction was deeply alarming and required immediate attention, the statement added. (www.un.org, UN press release GA/PAL/1142)

16

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

A Palestinian was arrested for allegedly assaulting a settler during a dispute over a stretch of land near the northern West Bank settlement of “Shiloh”. (AP)

Outgoing Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Karen AbuZayd, confirmed reports that Egypt was installing an iron barrier along its border with the Gaza Strip and added that the United States was financing the project. (IMEMC)

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, Catherine Ashton, will travel to the Middle East early next year, putting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict high on the agenda of the European Union. Ashton was expected to visit Jerusalem in early February to keep pressure on Israel to halt building settlements and urge Palestinians to return to negotiations. (Reuters)

A comprehensive peace deal can be reached between Israel and the Palestinians within six months if Israel completely froze its settlement construction, PA President Abbas said in an interview. (Haaretz)

Imprisoned West Bank Fatah leader and Palestinian Legislative Council member, Marwan Barghouti, believes that a Palestinian State will be brought about only through a combination of negotiations with Israel and popular “resistance”. In a written statement, he stated that “popular resistance alongside political work would be useful”. (AFP)

Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said in an interview that US backing gave Israel the option of not making peace. (The International Herald Tribune)

Just days before Bethlehem's busiest tourist season begins, Israeli authorities implemented a ban on foreign-passport holders travelling to Jerusalem on Palestinian buses. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel's Tourism Minister, Stas Misezhnikov, said that hundreds of Palestinian Christians from the Gaza Strip would be allowed to enter Israel in order to visit Bethlehem for Christmas. (The Jerusalem Post)

Israeli Minister of the Interior Eliyahu Yishai reportedly had given instructions to accelerate planning processes throughout the West Bank so that it would be possible, at the end of the settlement freeze, to start immediately a renewed construction boom without delay. (Ma'ariv)

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown telephoned Knesset member Tzipi Livni and expressed his total objection to the arrest warrant a UK court had issued against her. (The Jerusalem Post)

The PLO had decided that Mahmoud Abbas would stay on as Palestinian President after his term expired next month, PLO officials told Reuters. The PLO Central Council extended the term of the Palestinian Legislative Council under the Palestinian Basic Law until elections are held. (Ma'an News Agency, Reuters)

The majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (57 per cent) support PA President Abbas' decision not to run in the next elections, according to an independent [poll](#) conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel's Foreign Minister Liberman characterized the settlement freeze as a tactical move, but underlined that there would be no more gestures to induce negotiations with the Palestinians. He said that Israel was ready for negotiations with the Palestinians without any conditions. Mr. Liberman also indicated that large-scale settlement activities would be resumed at the end of the 10-month freeze. (Haaretz, IMEMC, The Jerusalem Post)

In a response to a recent recommendation by the British Government to clearly mark products made in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 39 members of the Knesset signed a petition calling for a boycott of goods and services from the United Kingdom. The petition called on the United Kingdom to overturn the decision. (IMEMC, Ynetnews)

Israel's Attorney General, Menachem Mazuz, testified in front of a State commission, saying that State institutions had helped settlers with illegal construction following the Gaza disengagement, “sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly”. (Ynetnews)

Hard-line settlers started rebuilding an outpost on a hill close to the “Alon Shvut” settlement near Bethlehem. “This is our response to the construction freeze decided by the Government,” settler leader Yehudit Katzover told AFP. (AFP)

The human rights organization Yesh Din, on behalf of landowners from the village of Silwad near Ramallah, filed a petition with the Israeli High Court, charging that settlers from the “Ofra” settlement had been using attack dogs to keep villagers from cultivating their own land. (The Jerusalem Post, www.yesh-din.org)

17

Two Qassam rockets exploded near Sderot; no injuries or damage were reported. No Palestinian faction claimed responsibility. (Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

Egyptian security officials and Hamas border officials stated that unidentified gunmen had opened fire across the border from Gaza into Egypt, shooting at Egyptian workers installing an underground metal barrier to seal off the tunnels. The official said that no one had been hurt in the shooting, but equipment had been damaged. (AP)

The IDF reported that Palestinians had hurled rocks and damaged an Israeli vehicle travelling near the “Karmeit Tzur” settlement. (www.idf.il) Speaking on the sidelines of the Climate Conference in Copenhagen, Israeli President Shimon Peres told Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad that the frozen peace talks had been harming both Israel and the Palestinians. He added that “the Palestinian Authority is making a big mistake by refusing to negotiate with Israel”. (Haaretz)

During Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 2008, former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had proposed giving the Palestinians 327 square km of land bordering the Gaza Strip and from the Judean Desert nature reserve, in exchange for settlement blocks in the West Bank. According to the [map](#) published by Haaretz, based on information from sources with detailed knowledge of the proposals, Mr. Olmert wanted to annex 6.3 per cent of the West Bank, home to 75 per cent of the settler population, in return for the equivalent of 5.8 per cent of the West Bank as well as a safe-passage route from Hebron to the Gaza Strip via a highway that would remain part of the sovereign territory of Israel but where there would be no Israeli presence.

The proposed annexation of settlement blocks roughly corresponded to the route of the separation wall. (Haaretz) Israeli forces arrested and scuffled with Palestinians while shutting down the Al-Quds Capital of Arab Culture festival in Jerusalem. Among those arrested was the Secretary-General of Fatah in Jerusalem, Omar Ash-Shabi. Soldiers also surrounded the French Cultural Centre and the British Council, where two simultaneous events had been planned as the finale of the festival. (Ma'an News Agency) Israel partially removed a Nablus-area checkpoint. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu invited a senior Egyptian prisoner exchange mediator to Israel, raising speculation that Israel was about to make its latest response to Hamas for a major prisoner swap. (Reuters)

The Attorney General of the United Kingdom would be asked to approve warrants before suspected war criminals could be arrested in the future, under a plan being negotiated by the Foreign Office in response to the attempts to arrest Israel's former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. The Guardian learned that discussions had begun in Whitehall on creating “safeguards” in criminal cases against visiting foreign leaders. Lawyers involved said that they were outraged by the proposed changes. (The Guardian)

Palestinian human-rights organizations told Xinhua News Agency that they would continue their efforts in the UK and elsewhere to bring leading Israelis to trial for war crimes. Many of the cases are the work of two Palestinian human rights organizations, the Ramallah-based Al-Haq and Al-Mezan, which operates out of Gaza. (Xinhua)

Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din filed a petition with the Israeli High Court of Justice on behalf of the residents of Silwad village, seeking the removal of roadblocks and numerous obstacles placed by settlers from “Ofra”, including guard dogs, preventing access to over 3,100 dunums (1 dunum = 1 sq. metres) of nearby agricultural land since 2000. (Ma'an News Agency)

Four right-wing activists were arrested at the “Talmon” settlement for reportedly attacking police officers and trying to prevent inspectors from touring the settlement. The activists had been quoted as claiming that border policemen had used excessive force against them. (Haaretz, Israel Radio)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak reiterated that the settlement freeze would be enforced without hesitation. (Haaretz)

The Israeli military allowed 90 truckloads of food and fuel for the power plant to enter Gaza and 1 truckload of flowers was permitted to leave the Gaza Strip. (IMEMC)

A front-page editorial in the State-owned Cairo daily *Al-Gomhuria* confirmed that Egypt was building an underground barrier on the border with Gaza and said it was a “sovereign right” that would increase pressure on Hamas. (AFP)

Speaking at the closing event of the Al-Quds Capital of Arab Culture Festival in Nablus, PA President Abbas deplored the “unprecedented” and “suffocating” settlement expansion in Jerusalem aimed at “eliminating its identity”. He also said: “There is no Palestine without Jerusalem. No one will accept this. Without Jerusalem there will be no peace”. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Institute for Waqf and Heritage issued a statement warning of the repeated calls by extremist Jewish groups to collectively break into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied Jerusalem, and to “practice their religious Jewish rituals related to the construction of the so-called third temple”. (The Palestine Telegraph)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert H. Serry [briefed](#) the Security Council on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. He said that efforts to forge peace were “in a race against time”. He warned that “if we cannot move forward towards a final status agreement, we risk sliding backwards, with both the Palestinian Authority and the two-State solution itself imperilled”.

Mr. Serry also said that the 10-month settlement freeze fell short of Israel's obligations under the road map. (UN News Centre)

Speaking at a [press conference](#) at United Nations Headquarters, Medea Benjamin, co-founder of [CODEPINK](#) announced that on 31 December 1,300 people from around the world would join 50,000 Palestinians in the “Gaza Freedom March”. The march was planned to convene in Cairo, cross into the Gaza Strip and march alongside Palestinians, to the Erez border crossing in a non-violent demonstration. (UN News Centre)

18

An Israeli military spokesperson said that Palestinians had opened fire on Israeli forces at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli government officials criticized the new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, for her statement to the European Parliament in which she reiterated that “East Jerusalem is occupied territory, together with the rest of the West Bank. The officials were “surprised, dissatisfied and concerned that such a senior figure had expressed criticism before visiting Israel and learning the facts”, adding that “the remarks cast a pall over relations with the European Union”. (Haaretz)

Ten activists were arrested during a protest against the eviction of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. (AFP)

The Swedish EU Presidency issued a [statement](#) to the effect that “the European Union expresses its disapproval of the decision of the Government of Israel on 13 December to include settlements in the National Priority Areas Programme”. (AFP, Reuters)

All crossings into Gaza were sealed off on Friday. (Ma'an News Agency)

19

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, denied press reports that the Palestinian Authority had called for an emergency Arab summit. (Kuwait News Agency)

The German mediator overseeing talks between Hamas and Israel over the release of Gilad Shalit had given the two sides two to three weeks to

come to an agreement, *Al-Ahram* quoted PA President Abbas as saying. (*Al-Ahram, The Jerusalem Post*)

20

Twenty Israeli military vehicles, backed by Apache helicopters, invaded the northern Gaza Strip, witnesses reported. Witnesses also reported that an Israeli shell fell in Beit Hanoun. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians who were carrying pipe bombs at a military checkpoint in the northern Jordan Valley, Israeli news reports said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Palestinians were injured in the southern Gaza Strip when a tractor ran over old ordnance, according to a Palestinian medical official. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Labour Party ministers had prevented Israel's Ministerial Committee on Legislation from discussing a proposed amendment to the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. The amendment was intended to make constitutional the law that prohibited Palestinians married to Israelis from obtaining citizenship. (*Haaretz*)

Israel had developed a comprehensive plan for destroying unauthorized settlement buildings in the West Bank in order to enforce the 10-month partial freeze of settlement construction, local media reported. *Haaretz*, citing a leaked army memo, reported that the illegal structures would be destroyed in "lightning operations" during which the army should seal off settlements from the media. (*Haaretz, AFP*)

Palestinians spend the equivalent of about a half billion US dollars every year buying products made in Israeli settlements, Palestinian Minister of Economy Hassan Abu Libdeh said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Stop-the-Wall Campaign announced that its coordinator, Jamal Juma, had been imprisoned by Israel since 16 December. Dozens of protest leaders, boycott campaigners and other civil society advocates had been arrested in recent weeks. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

21

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians in the West Bank overnight. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces had detained a young Palestinian from East Jerusalem, news reports said. An M16 assault rifle and other weapons had been found during the operation, reports said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli was slightly injured by stones hurled by Palestinians at her car, southwest of Bethlehem. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, and Egyptian Intelligence Chief, Omar Suleiman, met in Jerusalem where they reportedly discussed regional shared security threats as well as stalled peace talks. (*Haaretz*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khaled Mashaal, arrived in Libya for talks with Muammar Al-Qadhafi. Mr. Mashaal had visited Yemen and (the Islamic Republic of) Iran over the past several days in a series of trips partly related to Palestinian reconciliation efforts. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Spain's incoming Presidency of the EU pledged to push for the establishment in 2010 of an independent Palestinian State. Setting out Spain's programme for its Presidency, Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos said that the Presidency would intensify efforts to revive the stalled Middle East peace process when its six-month mandate started in the New Year. (*The Irish Times*)

The Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip decided to prevent farmers from planting on lands that had been hit by Israeli missiles and bombs during Operation Cast Lead. They also banned people from drawing water from wells in those lands or grazing for fear that some of the projectiles contained radioactive, cancer-causing and poisonous materials. (*Xinhua*)

Israel admitted that pathologists had harvested organs from dead Palestinians and others without the consent of their families – a practice that it had said ended in the 1990s. (*The Guardian*)

A few hundred Hamas supporters gathered along the Gaza-Egypt border to protest Egypt's construction of an underground wall to stem smuggling. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri called the wall an "unjustifiable situation" and demanded that construction be halted immediately. Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit underlined in an interview that Cairo would never accept any kind of threat to its national security. He said that his country had the right to make any kind of arrangements on its territories or even place eavesdropping equipment. (*AFP, www.alarabiya.net*)

Jordanian activists said that they were preparing to welcome a humanitarian convoy expected to pass through Jordan en route to Gaza later this month. (*The Jordan Times*)

Israeli authorities opened the Kerem Shalom crossing and the Karni crossing while keeping the Nahal Oz fuel terminal closed. (*Ma'an News Agency*) Three more people have died in the Gaza Strip after contracting swine flu, bringing the number of people who have died of the H1N1 virus in the Strip so far to 13. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Ayalon, said that if the EU had reached a unilateral decision regarding Jerusalem, Israel would no longer be committed to agreements made after Oslo. (*Israel National News*)

The Israel Law Center, a right-wing legal organization, petitioned the High Court of Justice demanding that Israel indict Hamas militants on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity instead of murder, as is the case today. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

22

Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle travelling near Nablus. No injuries had been reported but the vehicle was damaged. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli troops seized nine Palestinian civilians during pre-dawn raids in the West Bank. (*IMEMC*)

Efforts to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict were at a dangerous standstill and in need of a rescue mission that went beyond US mediation, speakers at a Russian Federation-sponsored Valdai International Discussion Club conference in Jordan said. The Russian Federation's Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Saltanov, told the conference: "We have not exhausted the full potential of the Quartet". (*Reuters*)

"Our dreams for a reconciled Holy Land seem to be utopia", said Fuad Twal, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, in a Christmas message. "Despite the praiseworthy efforts of politicians and men of goodwill to find a solution to the ongoing conflict, all of us, Palestinians and Israelis, have failed in achieving peace". (*AFP*)

The international community had betrayed the people of Gaza by failing to end an Israeli blockade to allow the territory to be rebuilt, a group of 16 humanitarian and human rights groups said in a [report](#). Jeremy Hobbs, Oxfam International's Executive Director, added in a statement: "[World powers] have wrung hands and issued statements, but have taken little meaningful action to attempt to change the damaging policy that prevents reconstruction, personal recovery and economic recuperation". (*The Guardian, www.amnesty.org, www.oxfam.org*)

The PA Cabinet decided to follow up on the organ harvesting allegations. In the meantime, the Knesset is planning to question the Health Minister over the alleged organ theft. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The EU said that it was raising relief funding to Palestinians in the West Bank by €7 million to a total of €74.4 million (\$106.3 million) in relief aid in 2009. Total EU aid to the Palestinians in 2009 would amount to €214 million. (*AFP*)

Approximately 100 trucks loaded with aid are expected to be transferred to the Gaza Strip via the Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) crossing. (*Palestine Press Agency*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) [said](#): “There has been scarcely any improvement in the situation since the end of the war in Gaza, mainly because of the tight closure, which is preventing reconstruction. ... Many Gazans feel despair as they have no prospect of living a decent life in the near future”. There were no signs that the \$4.5 billion pledged by donors in March 2009 had been put to use. Under international humanitarian law, Israel had an obligation to maintain conditions enabling the population to lead normal lives, the ICRC added. (www.icrc.org)

Israeli troops handed out demolition orders targeting animal barns and farming infrastructure belonging to Palestinians from different areas in the Jordan Valley. (IMEMC)

Israel made its latest offer in prisoner swap talks with Hamas after Prime Minister Netanyahu held five rounds of talks with a team of six senior ministers in less than 48 hours concerning the conditions of the swap. The German mediator was expected to travel to Gaza to deliver the offer. (AFP)

An Israeli judge extended the detention of Jamal Juma, the Palestinian coordinator of the Stop-the-Wall Campaign. (Ma'an News Agency)

Egypt rejected a request to allow activists to march across the border into the Gaza Strip to mark the anniversary of last year's conflict because of the “sensitive situation” in Gaza, according to the Foreign Ministry. Over 1,000 activists from 42 countries had signed-up to join the Gaza Freedom March planned for next week. “Our efforts and plans will not be altered at this point. We have set out to break the siege of Gaza and to march in Gaza on 31 December against the international blockade. We are continuing the journey”, organizers of the march said. (BBC, www.alarabiya.net)

23

An Israeli military bulldozer demolished a petrol station, a grocery store and a cargo container in the village of Qusra, south of Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

“But if any battle is imposed on us, we are ready with all our manpower and equipment to confront any Zionist war, any crime and any attack, regardless of scale”. (Reuters)

Egypt opened its border crossing with the Gaza Strip to allow some 500 Palestinian patients to cross into Egypt to receive medical treatment at hospitals in Cairo and to allow recovered patients to return to Gaza, police said, adding that the border would remain open until tomorrow. (DPA)

An Israeli court sentenced a Palestinian to 10 years in prison for allegedly plotting to attack Israeli soldiers near the Gaza border. (Ynetnews)

Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahhar said that the group was set to send a delegation from Gaza to Damascus by tomorrow to discuss with its exiled leaders Israel's response to the prisoner exchange deal, which he said Hamas had received from the German mediator and needed several days to review, according to Israel Radio. The Arab daily *Al-Hayat* reported that the two sides had agreed on the release of 443 out of 450 of the prisoners demanded by Hamas. The seven prisoners that Israel had refused to release included Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, according to the report. Another report in the Lebanese daily *Al-Mustaqbal* quoted Palestinian sources as saying that Hamas had agreed to have 123 of the prisoners released to places other than the West Bank, including Gaza, Qatar and European countries. (Haaretz)

Richard Falk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, [said](#): “The ordeal of the 1.5 million residents of Gaza affected by the Israeli blockade, over half of whom are children, has been allowed to continue without any formal objection by Governments and at the UN”, representing a “tragic failure of responsibility”. Mr. Falk urged Israel's European and North American allies to pressure Israel to lift its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, backed up by a credible threat of economic sanctions. He also urged the full and swift implementation of the Goldstone Report recommendations. On the first anniversary of the Gaza war, Mr. Falk described civil society initiatives such as the Free Gaza March and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign as “the only meaningful current challenge to Israel's violations”. (www.unog.ch)

“Viva Palestina”, a humanitarian convoy of 210 trucks laden with basic food items and medical supplies destined for the Gaza Strip, arrived in Jordan.

The convoy, led by British Member of Parliament George Galloway, was scheduled to enter the Gaza Strip on 27 December to mark one year since the Israeli attack on Gaza. (DPA)

The Muslim Council of Britain said that it was deeply disappointed that British Foreign Secretary David Miliband had promised to change a law so that judges could no longer issue arrest warrants against Israeli officials or military officers. The Council said that the move was biased towards Israel. (Haaretz)

24

A Palestinian was killed when a smuggling tunnel collapsed underneath the Gaza-Egypt border, officials said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A settler from “Shavei Shomron” was killed when Palestinian militants opened fire at his vehicle on a road connecting settlements in the West Bank. (Haaretz)

Israeli soldiers arrested two Palestinians near Nablus. (Ynetnews)

Israeli security forces said that they had thwarted a bomb attack after uncovering an explosive device on a road between the West Bank town of Bir Nabala and the “Givat Ze'ev” settlement. (Ynetnews)

Israel has been accused of exaggerating the security risks that foreign tourists faced in Bethlehem and deliberately impoverishing the city by ensuring that tourists spent as little money there as possible. Palestinian officials said that Bethlehem had been blocked from benefiting from a record 1.4 million foreign visitors to the West Bank's most important tourist attraction. (The Daily Telegraph)

The latest [Policy Brief](#) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development found that living conditions in Gaza were at their worst since the occupation began in 1967. As a result of the blockade, Gaza's private sector, which once employed over 50 per cent of the labour force, had lost most of its 3,900 registered enterprises, while agriculture's share of employment had plummeted to single-digit levels. More than 80 per cent of the population were impoverished; 43 per cent unemployed; and 75 per cent lacked food security. The situation has not been as dire in the West Bank, which benefited from increased foreign aid and the easing of restrictions on the movement of goods and labour, but any positive impact on the entire Palestinian economy was yet to materialize. (www.unctad.org)

A Gaza-bound aid convoy currently in Jordan would not be allowed into Egypt through the Red Sea port of Nuweiba, the most direct route, Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. “Entry can only be through El Arish”, on the Mediterranean coast, Mr. Hossam Zaki told AFP. (AFP)

Israeli authorities decided to open the Kerem Shalom and Nahal Oz crossings into Gaza today while keeping the Karni crossing closed. (Ma'an News Agency)

In anticipation of Christmas, the IDF and the Israeli Civil Administration issued an unlimited quota of one-month-long permits for Palestinian Christian

residents of the West Bank, allowing them entry into Israel for religious and family gatherings. The army said that more than 10,000 permits, valid between 20 December and 20 January, had been issued. In addition, 300 Gaza Christians over the age of 35 would be permitted entry into the West Bank for 24 hours during the holiday, the IDF said. Another 300 Christians would be permitted to cross to the Ben Gurion International Airport.

(The Jerusalem Post)

About 200 Israeli teenagers, soon to be drafted, sent a letter to Israel's Defense Minister, saying they would not enforce any military orders to dismantle settlements in the West Bank because such orders would violate Jewish law. *(AP)*

Israeli settlers had destroyed construction materials at a Palestinian house being built in the village of Burin, south of Nablus, local sources said.

(Ma'an News Agency)

A delegation of Hamas officials headed to Damascus to meet with the movement's leaders there on the latest Israeli response to ongoing negotiations for a prisoner swap deal. Deputy Chief of the Hamas Political Bureau, Moussa Abu Marzouq, said that Hamas would deliver its answer "next week at the latest". *(AP, Ma'an News Agency)*

A group of Israelis, wounded in Palestinian rocket attacks during the Gaza war, said that they had asked a Belgian court to issue war crimes arrest warrants against Hamas leaders. *(AFP)*

A vigil will take place outside the Israeli Embassy in London to mark the first anniversary of "Operation Cast Lead". British Members of Parliament including Martin Linton and Jeremy Corbyn, would be joining the vigil, which would call for an end to Israel's siege on Gaza and for Israeli war criminals to be brought to justice, the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign](#) said. *(Wafa, www.palestinecampaign.org)*

26

Israeli soldiers killed three members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Nablus whom Israel had accused of killing a settler two days earlier.

Israeli military spokesman Peter Lerner said that the militants had not shot at the troops but soldiers had acted assuming they were "armed and dangerous". An Israeli group, B'Tselem, said that Israeli soldiers might have executed two of the three Palestinians. Relatives and witnesses said that the two had been unarmed and had not tried to flee. *(Haaretz, Reuters)*

Israeli soldiers shot and killed three Palestinians near the border fence with the Gaza Strip whom they suspected of trying to infiltrate into Israel. A Hamas security source said that the three had been collecting scrap metal. *(Reuters)*

27

An 18-year-old Israeli woman suffered second-degree burns after Palestinians hurled a flaming bottle at a bus south of Hebron. *(Haaretz)*

The spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement:

A year after the start of Operation Cast Lead, the Secretary-General is deeply concerned that neither the issues that led to this conflict nor its worrying aftermath are being addressed.

Very few of the key elements for stability, as identified in Security Council resolution 1860, have been implemented. While violence has been at lower levels this year, incidents continue and there is no durable ceasefire in place.

The quality and quantity of humanitarian supplies entering Gaza is insufficient, broader economic and reconstruction activity is paralyzed and the people of Gaza are denied basic human rights. Efforts are being made to combat illicit trafficking of weapons, but smuggling continues. Egypt has tirelessly worked for Palestinian unity, but without a breakthrough so far.

There is a sense of hopelessness in Gaza today for 1.5 million Palestinians, half of whom are under 18 years of age. Their fate and the well-being of Israelis are intimately connected.

A fundamentally different approach to Gaza is urgently required. The Secretary-General calls on Israel to end the unacceptable and counterproductive blockade of Gaza, facilitate economic activity and civilian reconstruction and fully respect and uphold international law. He calls on Hamas to bring an end to violence and fully respect and uphold international law. The Secretary-General also calls on all Palestinians to work for unity and elections within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority.

Today's anniversary is a reminder of the bitter consequences of the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to which there is and can be no military solution. The urgent priority of all Israeli and Palestinian leaders, the region and the international community as a whole must be the achievement of a two-State solution. *(UN News Centre)*

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Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered farm lands near Khan Yunis and Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip opening fire at homes and damaging crops and trees. No injuries were reported. *(IMEMC)*

Israeli forces detained nine Palestinians during overnight operations in the West Bank. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Prime Minister Netanyahu raised publicly the prospect of maintaining Israeli forces along the eastern border of a future Palestinian State to prevent arms smuggling. Stressing that a future Palestinian State must be demilitarized, he said that "the problem of demilitarization must be resolved effectively and this entails effectively blocking unauthorized entry, first and foremost from the east, wherever the border is defined". He added: "I doubt whether anything except a real presence of the State of Israel, of Israeli forces, can accomplish that". *(Reuters)*

"US Special Envoy George Mitchell will present two draft letters of guarantee, one for Israel and one to the Palestinian Authority during his next visit to the region. ... The United States is hoping that the two letters will serve as a basis for the re-launch of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations but we don't know if they will satisfy the Palestinians who want a complete freeze of settlement activity before talks resume", an Arab diplomat in Cairo told AFP.

A Western diplomat in Cairo said the United States was currently in talks with the Palestinians and Egypt, hoping that the two letters would "allow for the re-launch of negotiations". *(AFP)*

The UK Department for International Development said: "A year after the start of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, International Development Secretary Douglas Alexander unveiled a £53.5 million package, including measures to stop Gazan children becoming radicalized and secure the delivery of basic services across the occupied Palestinian territories (OPTs). On emergency aid, £7 million will be spent to help people to survive the winter and £5 million will pay for 562 teachers to work for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides schooling for 206,000 children in Gaza. A further £41.5 million will enable the Palestinian Authority (PA) to pay public sector salaries to keep basic services running across the OPTs". *(The Independent, www.dfid.gov.uk)*

Five Palestinians were injured when a bus skidded out of control and overturned after it had been pelted with stones thrown by Israeli settlers near Nablus. An Israeli military spokesperson said that a complaint had been filed with the Nablus District Coordination Office. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israel announced plans to build nearly 700 new homes in settlements in East Jerusalem. Under the new blueprint, Israel's Housing Ministry invited contractors to bid for the construction of 198 housing units in "Pisgat Ze'ev", 377 homes in "Neve Ya'akov" and 117 dwellings in "Har Homa".

(Reuters)

The Swedish EU Presidency issued a [statement](#) expressing dismay at the Israeli settlement expansion announcement, and urging the Government of Israel to reconsider these plans. “The Presidency recalls that the European Union has never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967.

If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States”, the statement added. ([www.se2009.eu](#))

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs [said](#) in a statement: “The United States opposes new Israeli construction in East Jerusalem. The status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved by the parties through negotiations and supported by the international community.

Neither party should engage in efforts or take actions that could unilaterally pre-empt, or appear to pre-empt, negotiations”. (*AFP, Reuters, [www.whitehouse.gov](#)*)

The website of Israel's Rishet Bet radio station reported that the Israeli Foreign Ministry had completed its response to the Goldstone report and would soon deliver it to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon after Israel's political and military leaders had debated whether to make public the findings. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In citing the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Palestine News Agency (WAFA) reported that over 2,000 supporters of Palestinian human rights had turned up outside the Israeli embassy in London to attend a vigil, calling for an end to the siege on Gaza and for war criminals to be brought to justice. (*WAFA*)

About 80 foreigners protested outside the French embassy in Cairo, following the refusal by Egypt to grant more than 1,400 activists from 43 countries permission to enter Gaza to mark the first anniversary of Operation Cast Lead. Egyptian police detained 40 American protesters at the US embassy in Cairo as they were seeking assistance to enter the Gaza Strip. Addressing the “Viva Palestina” convoy to Gaza led by British MP George Galloway, which had been stuck in Aqaba, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit announced that the Rafah crossing would be open on 3 January. The convoy would take a detour, travelling to Amman before heading to Syria to load the cargo onto a ship at the Mediterranean port of Latakia. (*Daily News Egypt, Ma'an News Agency, The Jordan Times*)

Human Rights Watch [said](#): “One year after the start of major hostilities in Gaza, both Israel and Hamas have failed to punish members of their own forces for laws-of-war violations during the fighting. ... Israel's ongoing blockade of Gaza has also created massive humanitarian need and prevented the reconstruction of schools, homes and basic infrastructure”. (*AFP, [www.hrw.org](#)*)

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An Israeli police spokesman said that an Israeli settlement guard had shot a Palestinian in self-defence at the “Bat Ayin” settlement. According to some sources, the shot was fired following an attempt to steal the guard's weapon, while others attributed the clash to a dispute over land rights. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Three Palestinians were brought in for interrogation by Israeli forces. Two of the men had been arrested in the Ramallah area and the third near Hebron. Four Palestinians, including two teenage boys, were detained by Israeli forces in an overnight raid in Bil'in. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinian farmers near the northern Gaza Israeli borders reported that Israeli tanks had invaded their lands and opened fire at them while bulldozers were destroying their crops. (*IMEMC*)

Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin told the Knesset that while Hamas was clamping down on rocket attacks against Israel, it continued to amass a stockpile of anti-aircraft missiles and rockets that could reach Israel's major population centres. He said that while the probability of terrorism on the scale of the recent intifada remained low in the near future, should Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti become the next PA President, a third intifada might ensue. (*Haaretz, Ynetnews*)

Saudi King Abdullah received PA President Abbas and they discussed “the stalled peace process in addition to the need for the international community to carry out its duties towards reaching a just and comprehensive solution in the region ensuring for the Palestinian people the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds as its capital, according to resolutions of the international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative”. (*Saudi Press Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu travelled to Cairo for talks with Egyptian President Mubarak to discuss efforts to revive the peace process. As the US Administration was said to be drafting letters of guarantee for Israel and the Palestinians to serve as a basis for re-launching peace talks, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said he would visit Washington in January. Following the meeting, a top Egyptian diplomat expressed optimism, stating that the ideas presented by the Israeli Prime Minister went further than past proposals. (*AFP, AP*)

Hamas leaders meeting in Damascus indicated that, while Hamas was ready to discuss Palestinian unity, it would not sign the Egyptian reconciliation document. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli Supreme Court ordered the military to reopen West Bank sections of a road linking Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The road had been closed since 2002, when Palestinian militants shot at Israeli vehicles. A petition for its reopening had been filed in 2007. (*AP*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [reported](#) that there were 10.9 million Palestinians in the world at the end of 2009: 3.99 million in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (36.7 per cent), of whom 2.5 million were living in the West Bank and 1.5 million in the Gaza Strip; 1.25 million (11.5 per cent) in Israel; 3.24 million in Jordan (29.8 per cent); 1.78 million (16.3 per cent) in other Arab countries; and 618,000 in the rest of the world (5.7 per cent). ([www.pcbs.gov.ps](#))

Peace Now [said](#) that the Israeli Government had informed the High Court of Justice that it had decided to advance the process of planning in the settlement of “Kiryat Netafim”. “The announcement came in response to a petition filed by Peace Now to halt the [unauthorized] construction of 15 houses in Kiryat Netafim by the Amana Organization and is intended to [legitimize] retroactively the building in the settlement ... with the potential of expanding it”, Peace Now said. (*Haaretz, [www.peacenow.org.il](#)*)

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, Richard Falk, reiterated his call for a threat of economic sanctions against Israel to force it to lift its blockade of Gaza. While recognizing the unlikelihood of such a step, he told UN Radio that the lack of threats of sanctions suggested that the United States, the Quartet and the EU were not serious in their calls for the blockade to be lifted. (*UN News Centre*)

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The Israeli military said it had detained four Palestinians during overnight operations in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency, [www.idf.il](#)*)

Jordanian Interior Minister Nayef Qadi met his Palestinian counterpart, Said Abu Ali, to discuss cooperation between the two ministries, including the training of PA security forces in Jordan. (*DPA*)

A mortar shell was fired at Israel from Gaza. No injuries or damage were reported. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *Ynetnews*)

Hamas said that its security forces had uncovered a plot by Israel to gather information about the location of IDF Corporal Gilad Shalit. A senior Hamas official claimed that Israel had recruited a number of former PA security officers. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A Hamas official, Ayman Taha, said, after leaders of the group had ended talks in Damascus, that Hamas had not agreed to Israel's latest terms for a prisoner swap and had asked a German mediator to continue to pursue a deal. "The consultations will continue and the negotiations will continue. We cannot say that the deal has reached a dead end. And we cannot say that [the talks were] concluded by a deal", Mr. Taha said in Gaza. (*Reuters*)

Arab League Secretary-General, Amre Moussa, said that the United States must not be the sole mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and called for a greater role for the United Nations. (*Haaretz*, *Reuters*)

Both Israeli and Palestinian officials indicated that progress had been made towards the resumption of the peace process, following talks in Cairo on 29 December. An aide to President Abbas, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that the "region will see important political activity in the next two weeks". Mark Regev, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Netanyahu, said that "the Israeli Government hopes we will indeed see the resumption of talks with the Palestinians in the near future". (*Reuters*)

International activists numbering 100 left Cairo for the Gaza Strip, after Egypt had denied passage to another 1,200 who had planned to march in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. "Two buses with 100 delegates on board left this morning for Gaza", said Ann Wright, one of the organizers of the Gaza Freedom March. (*AFP*)

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Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades (military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees) said that its fighters had clashed with Israeli forces in northern Gaza for three hours. An Israeli military spokesperson confirmed that three gunmen had opened fire on an Israeli patrol operating in the border area next to the shore in the northern Gaza Strip. No injuries were reported on either side. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.idf.il)

Israeli forces detained 13 young men, including an officer with the PA security forces and two minors, overnight after storming their homes south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Grad rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed in southern Israel, one hitting Netivot. One woman there suffered shock but no damage was reported. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the firing. (*Haaretz*)

The Israeli military said that it had detained two Palestinians north-west of Ramallah. Also, a university student was seized from his home in the village of Madama, south of Nablus, local officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces demolished two Palestinian agricultural buildings east of Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had proposed an Egyptian-hosted summit with PA President Abbas as a possible way to resume peace talks, Israeli officials said. (*Reuters*)

Two crossings into Gaza would be open today, Palestinian liaison official Raed Fattouh announced. The IDF reported that 115 humanitarian aid trucks and a supply of gas were scheduled to cross into the Gaza Strip. A flower export from Gaza would also be allowed. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.idf.il)

Regional and local settler councils in the West Bank are planning to hold a one-day strike on 3 January to protest the settlement freeze. They are also planning to rally in front of the Prime Minister's office during the weekly Cabinet meeting. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A relative of former Kach Party Chairman, Meir Kahane, had been arrested on suspicion of torching a mosque in the West Bank some three weeks previously. The suspect was reported to be a settler teen whose parents had been killed in "Palestinian terror attacks". (*Haaretz*, *Ynetnews*)

At least 7,500 Palestinians were being held by Israel at the end of 2009, the PA said. The detainees included 310 children and 304 people held under administrative detention without trial. They also included 17 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, mostly from Hamas, two former Ministers, and a number of political leaders. Some 6,330 prisoners were from the West Bank, 750 from the Gaza Strip, and some 420 from East Jerusalem and Israel. More than 5,000 Palestinians had been detained in 2009, but most were later released. (*AFP*)

Hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis, together with foreign activists, rallied on both sides of the Erez [Beit Hanoun] crossing against the Israeli blockade of Gaza. During demonstrations in Cairo by international activists barred from entering Gaza through Egypt, Egyptian police reportedly clashed with the protesters, injuring three. (*Haaretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*, www.middle-east-online.com, *Xinhua*)