

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

Monthly highlights

- Israel launches military operation in Beit Hanoun. ([1 November](#))
- Security Council fails to adopt resolution on Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. ([11 November](#))
- Israel, Palestinian Authority and Palestinian factions agree on a ceasefire for the Gaza Strip. ([25 November](#))
- Human Rights Council adopts resolution on Israel settlements. ([27 November](#))

1

Six Palestinians were killed and some 40 wounded when IDF infantry units, backed by tanks, seized control of Beit Hanoun. One IDF soldier was killed. Israeli forces also staged operations in the nearby refugee camp of Jabalya and the town of Beit Lahia. "President Mahmoud Abbas has strongly condemned the Israeli massacre that has left 6 martyrs and nearly 40 wounded in Beit Hanoun," his office said in a statement. Palestinian Authority (PA) Cabinet Spokesman Ghazi Hamad urged the international community to take a serious step to stop this crazy attack from the Israeli side. (*AFP, AP*)

The IDF wounded 4 Palestinian teenagers in Tulkarm and arrested 16 Palestinians in Nablus, Jenin and Hebron. (*Wafa*)

A Qassam rocket, fired from the Gaza Strip, landed in an open area near Sderot. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz said: "No one can put an absolute stop to Qassam fire, but that doesn't mean we have to remain helpless. We will not let them grow stronger." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Speaking on Dutch television, King Abdullah II of Jordan said: "The middle of the year 2007 is the time limit for the end of the conflict on the basis of a two-State solution. If this does not happen, there will be no peace between the Arabs and the Israelis, with all the consequences and threats of that, for international peace". (*Xinhua*)

Israel's Security Cabinet met to discuss the Gaza Strip operation. The formal announcement after the meeting stated that the Cabinet had decided to authorize the continuation of the current security operations and increase the pressure on Hamas and other terror organizations in an effort to halt the firing of rockets into Israel, and to authorize steps that would allow responsible parties in the Palestinian Authority, who were not from the Hamas Government, to realize their influence. (*Ynetnews*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told the London-based *Al-Awsat* newspaper that his Government would not allow Israel to bomb areas along the Egypt-Gaza border and that any Israeli bombing in the Salah al-Din Philadelphi area would violate international treaties. He said that Egypt's border with Gaza was a matter of sovereignty between Egypt and the Palestinians. (*AP*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz approved the transfer of 5,000 rifles from Jordan to the Presidential Guard of PA President Abbas, and was currently weighing the possibility of allowing the Badr Brigade, a group loyal to President Abbas, into the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Political-Security Ministerial Council of the Knesset had decided to adopt the plan of United States Security Coordinator Gen. Keith Dayton, which he presented to the Quartet in London. The plan aimed to arm and train Palestinian Presidential Guard Forces. (*IMEMC*)

The International Monetary Fund reported that between April and September of 2006, the PA took in revenues of some \$500 million, down from more than \$1.2 billion in the same period in 2005, even as the payroll expanded. Much of the drop was due to the refusal by Israel to transfer an estimated \$360 million in taxes it collected on behalf of the PA. Some \$420 million in foreign aid had reached the Palestinians during the period, more than in all of 2005. This had enabled the PA to pay civil servants some 40 per cent of their salaries in the past 6 months. The bulk of the aid, some \$246 million, had come from Arab countries and had been transferred directly to PA President Abbas. (*The Jerusalem Post, www.imf.org*)

2

Four Palestinians were killed in an IDF incursion in the Beit Hanoun area. The victims included two youths, aged 20 and 22, a 75-year-old man; and a 15-year-old youth. The town had been under curfew. "Residents are in a panic as the sound of gunfire and explosion never stops," Yamen Hamad, a local journalist, told *Reuters* by telephone. The IDF also arrested 25 Palestinians in the West Bank, according to Israeli sources. (*AP, IMEMC, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

Six Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, despite ongoing incursions in the Beit Hanoun area. One of them hit a house in the

town of Sderot, setting fire to the place. One woman suffered from shock as a result of the attack. (AP, Ynetnews)

The Palestinian death toll, as a result of an IDF incursion the previous day in the Gaza Strip, rose to 12 deaths. (Ha'aretz, IMEMC)

A teenaged Palestinian boy was killed and his older brother was injured during an incursion by IDF troops into the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. Ibrahim Sanaqra was killed when an Israeli sniper shot him as he was trying to rescue his brother, Ahmed, 28, who had been seriously injured by an Israeli bullet. Ahmed Sanaqra was reportedly trying to plant an explosive device near the camp. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF arrested 25 Palestinians in the West Bank. The arrest campaign had been focused on Bethlehem, according to troops, who added that they had found a pistol and ammunition in one of the houses searched during the operation. (Xinhua)

Settlers from the "Shvut Rachel" settlement attacked several Palestinians who were picking olives in their orchards in the area. (IMEMC)

A top aide to PA President Abbas said the President was inclined to seek new elections if talks with Hamas on forming a national unity government did not produce results in about two weeks. Chief of Staff Rafiq Hussein added that Mr. Abbas still hoped to reach a solution. But if negotiations failed, Mr. Abbas felt instinctively that the best thing was to go back to his people. (AP)

Mustafa Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and Head of the Palestinian National Initiative, left for Gaza to meet PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh after meeting with PA President Abbas. Mr. Barghouti said, in a statement faxed to the press, that a national unity Government could see the light of day during the coming days "if true intentions were available". (Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas hosted a meeting with the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, C. David Welch, and the US Deputy National Security Advisor, Elliot Abrams. After the meeting, PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat told reporters that the meeting focused especially on the military escalation by Israel in the Gaza Strip. He emphasized that the imposition of a military solution would not bring a political solution. "A political solution needs to be a political solution from the ground up," Mr. Erakat said. He added that the policy of collective punishment pursued by Israel would only increase the bloodshed. In addition, he noted that President Abbas had also discussed the issue of prisoners and the efforts of the Egyptian authorities to reach a formula for the prisoner exchange deal. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

Press statements were made by Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak following a high-level meeting in Moscow. Mr. Putin said, "We believe the work within the Quartet can only be successful if the influential forces in the region – and we undoubtedly include Egypt in this category – join in this work. We believe that the Egyptian leadership can play an important role in establishing contacts between Palestinians and Israelis and also in achieving harmony within Palestine itself..." Mr. Mubarak said, "I am very pleased that ... [the Russian and Egyptian] positions coincided with respect to the situation in the Middle East, on the Palestinian problem ... same opinion on the need to re-establish the Middle East peace process, especially to unblock the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and open the way to finding a solution." (www.In.mid.ru)

3

Nine Palestinians were killed and over 20 injured in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, where Israeli troops confronted dozens of militants who had barricaded themselves in the Al-Nasir mosque. Two women, aged 40 and 45, were killed when soldiers fired at a demonstration of hundreds of women who marched toward the mosque. Three other women were in critical condition. The army accused Hamas of using women as human shields by calling on them to take to the streets and help free the trapped militants. The standoff lasted hours and most of the militants escaped from the mosque. (AP, BBC, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), Ha'aretz, Reuters)

A Hamas member was killed during clashes in Beit Hanoun. Four other Hamas members, including a Hamas commander, were killed in an Israeli Air Force strike in the Gaza City neighbourhood of Sajaiya. In the West Bank, a Fatah member was killed in Nablus. In Bethlehem, a 65-year-old Palestinian woman was killed, caught in the crossfire between militants holed up in a house and Israeli soldiers on an arrest raid. A total of 23 persons, including militants, women and children, have been killed since the IDF ground operation called Clouds of Autumn started in the northern Gaza Strip on 1 November. (AP, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

The Saraya Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, launched two home-made Quds-2 rockets at the Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) border crossing. The Brigades affirmed that the action was in retaliation for Israeli atrocities in Beit Hanoun. (Ma'an News Agency)

Four Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip, one landing on a house in Kibbutz Beeri, causing damage but no injuries. A second landed in a residential neighbourhood in Sderot. (Ynetnews)

At least 19 Palestinians were killed in IDF operations in the Gaza Strip. Eight were civilians, including a four-year-old boy and two women. (Ha'aretz)

The following is a statement attributable to the spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Middle East:

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about the continuing escalation of violence and the rising death toll caused by the Israeli military operation in northern Gaza. Military operations in populated areas inevitably cause civilian casualties, and in this operation several civilians have already been killed and wounded, including women and at least one Palestinian child.

The Secretary-General urges Israel to exercise maximum restraint, do their utmost to protect civilians and to refrain from further escalating an already grave situation. He also calls on Palestinian militants to stop firing rockets against Israeli civilian targets.

All concerned should remember that continuing violence is liable to make the search for a just and lasting peace in the region even more difficult.

(UN press release SG/SM/10713-PAL/2061)

A Palestinian non-violent protest turned violent when Israeli soldiers and border police attacked the demonstrators with batons, rifle butts and their fists. Some 60 to 70 Palestinians and international peace activists marched to an Israeli military checkpoint near Bethlehem, carrying olive branches and some olive oil products. The activists had been chanting slogans calling for peace when Israeli soldiers turned on them. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli soldiers arrested Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Rahman Zeidan in his house in Ramallah. Israel has now detained 5 Ministers and some 27 legislators. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

The PA issued a statement condemning the arrest of Minister Zeidan. The statement expressed astonishment at the international silence regarding the Israeli atrocities and massacres. It also stressed the need to enhance Palestinian unity to face such atrocities. Fatah spokesperson Jamal Nazzal also condemned the arrest, stating that such Israeli escalations coincided with Palestinians effort to reach a decisive moment in forming a national unity government. (Ma'an News Agency)

4

Five Hamas members and two civilians were killed in a series of incidents in the Gaza Strip. Louay al-Borno, a Hamas leader, was killed while travelling in a commercial vehicle which was targeted in an Israeli air strike. Another Palestinian, Riad Siam, was killed by IDF sniper fire in Beit Hanoun. Three other Hamas members were also killed by IDF shelling. (Ha'aretz)

Witnesses reported that large military bulldozers had begun demolishing homes near the Um al-Nasir mosque that had been the scene of a standoff a day earlier in Beit Hanoun. Residents of the homes had received no warning and were seen running for safety. (Ha'aretz)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said that the IDF operations in the Gaza Strip were liable to endanger the life of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, as the military was likely to strike the building in which he was being held. (*Ha'aretz*)

In a press release, the Presidency of the European Union said that it was profoundly concerned by the increased violence in Gaza. The Presidency deplored the growing number of civilian casualties the Israeli military operation had caused. The right of all States to defend themselves did not justify the disproportionate use of violence or actions which are contrary to international humanitarian law. The Presidency called on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to terrorist activities, including the firing of rockets on Palestinian territory. (<http://www.eu2006.fi/news>)

5

Ten Qassam rockets were fired toward the western Negev. Four hit the Sderot area. (*Ha'aretz*)

Three Palestinians, including two militants, were killed by IDF fire in Beit Hanoun. Palestinians identified the dead men as Mahdi al-Hamadi, 23, of Hamas, and Wissam Obayed of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The IDF maintained its curfew in Beit Hanoun, leading to a severe food and water shortage. Residents had not been allowed to leave their homes and did not have electricity. In Nablus, IDF troops wounded two armed Palestinians during patrols for wanted men in the area. Palestinians opened fire on IDF troops west of Jenin and in Ramallah. There were no injuries. (*Ha'aretz*)

IDF troops arrested 20 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert confirmed that military operations in the Gaza Strip would continue until Palestinian rocket attacks significantly decreased. "We have declared that we will never accept the ongoing Qassam fire and that we would take any steps needed to considerably reduce the fire and prevent terror activity. The operation is limited in time but we have no intention of announcing when it will end," he said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Dr. Jum'ah As Saqqa, the public relations director at Ash-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, said that medical crews had discovered, from cases brought to the hospitals, that a new weapon was being used by the Israeli army. These weapons "cause burns that pass through the body to the internal organs." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In St. Peter's Square in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI said that he was following with deep worry the news about the grave situation in the Gaza Strip and wanted to express his closeness to the civilian population which was suffering the consequences of the acts of violence. (*BBC*)

6

An Israeli aircraft fired a missile into a town in the northern Gaza Strip, hitting a group of youths on their way to school. A 16-year-old boy was killed and at least six others were wounded, including another 16-year-old boy who was in serious condition, hospital officials said. The missile hit a minivan parked in the Jabalya refugee camp. A Palestinian was killed by an airstrike also in the northern Gaza Strip. The dead man was identified as Mohammed Taha, 30, a member of Hamas. About 50 Palestinians had been killed in Israel's military incursion, begun 6 days earlier.

(*AP*, *BBC*, *Xinhua*)

A Palestinian woman suicide bomber blew herself up near Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip, wounding one soldier, the Israeli army said. (*Reuters*)

PA President Abbas and negotiators from Hamas had reached an agreement in principle on forming a Palestinian Government of technocrats, but still needed to work on important details, Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Yahya Mousa said. He added, "We have agreed on the political platform of the new Government." Mr. Abbas was to head to the Gaza Strip for further talks with Hamas officials. Under the emerging plan, the Hamas Cabinet and Prime Minister would step down and be replaced by a team of experts. Mr. Mousa said that a new prime minister would be chosen, and his name would be presented to President Abbas for approval. Egyptian sources said that the issue of the new government was connected with the US administration accepting such a Government. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas asked the Security Council to intervene and bring an end to the escalating Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip, calling for a ceasefire and requesting the presence of United Nations observers on the Gaza Strip-Israel border, Riyad Mansour, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, told UN correspondents. Italy expressed its willingness to participate if the Security Council agreed to set up such a force between the Gaza Strip and Israel, he said. (*UN News Centre*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it was appalled at the deaths on 3 November of two Palestinian paramedics during an Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip. Both the paramedics and the vehicle they were travelling in were clearly marked with a distinctive emblem identifying them as medical personnel, according to an ICRC spokesperson. He also said that the paramedics were in the process of evacuating a dead body when Israeli munitions suddenly hit the area. (*Reuters*)

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society and other medical institutions in Jenin, in the West Bank, organized a protest march against Israeli aggression targeting ambulance crews in the Gaza Strip. Walid Abu Al-Haija of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society gave assurances that medical crews would carry on their humanitarian duties despite the bloodshed and continued Israeli crimes against them. They appealed to international human rights institutions to intervene to stop the Israeli aggression and demand respect for all medical crews. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that his Government would be willing to negotiate with a Hamas-led Palestinian Government if it met international demands that it renounce violence and recognize Israel. (*Ha'aretz*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said with reference to Hamas: "I am not so sure that it is better to have these groups running the streets, masked, with guns, rather than having them have to face voters and having to deliver." (*AP*)

PA President Abbas received US Consul General in Jerusalem Jacob Walles in the presidential headquarters in Ramallah. They discussed the latest developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the repercussions of Israeli incursions in the Gaza Strip. (*Wafa*)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar called on Arab countries to assume responsibility towards the Palestinian people and act urgently through international organizations and by all methods to put an end to the Israeli aggression. (*AFP*)

"China has always insisted that Palestine-Israel disputes should be solved through peaceful negotiations and opposes any move which could escalate tension in the region," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu. (*Xinhua*)

The Cabinet of Saudi Arabia said in a statement that it had become very necessary to call for an international conference attended by all parties to bring an end to the Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people." (*AFP*)

7

IDF troops pulled out of Beit Hanoun, taking up positions outside the town. (*AP*)

Two members of the Islamic Jihad were shot dead by Israeli soldiers near Beit Hanoun, Palestinian sources said. North of Gaza City, a woman, Nahla Shanti, and Abdel Majid Ghirbawi were killed when a shell struck the home of a Hamas lawmaker where the two were staying. Another Palestinian was killed nearby during an exchange of fire. In the Jabalya refugee camp, Mohammed Abu Habel, a member of the Hamas armed wing, was killed by Israeli shelling, medics said. Seven Palestinians, including a paramedic, were wounded in Beit Lahia, locals said. (*AFP*, *Wafa*)

Four Qassam rockets were launched from the northern Gaza Strip into Israel without causing any damage or casualties. (*ynetnews*)

The IDF arrested 38 Palestinians in Nablus, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Hebron, PA security sources said. (*Wafa*)

An Israeli settler shot and wounded a Palestinian in Hebron, medics said. (*Wafa*)

The IDF would ease movement restrictions in the West Bank in November for the upcoming Christian holidays, the IDF said, and 2,000 merchants

and 1,000 workers would be permitted to enter Israel. (*Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh met for more than two hours in Gaza City, but officials said that the talks ended with no accord on a national unity government. Both sides said talks would continue. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas, in an interview published in the Saudi Arabian newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*, requested that Hamas release IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit into his custody, so that he could begin negotiations with Israel over his release. Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal stated that Hamas would continue to kidnap Israeli soldiers until all Palestinian prisoners were released. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that unemployment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had increased from 28.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2006 to 30.3 per cent in the third quarter. (*Wafa*)

8

In the West Bank, IDF troops ambushed a group of armed Palestinians near the West Bank town of Jenin, killing four, Palestinian security officials said. After the ambush and the ensuing gun battle, a 30-year-old civilian man climbed to a rooftop to observe the clashes and was shot dead, making him the fifth victim, security and medical officials said. (*Ha'aretz*)

IDF artillery shells struck a residential area in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, killing at least 19 Palestinians and wounding dozens of others.

Eight children and seven women were among the dead, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, adding that 18 of the victims were members of the Athamna family. Khaled Radi, a Palestinian Health Ministry official, said all of those killed were civilians. According to witnesses, the victims were sleeping when the 15-minute barrage of shells first hit. Mr. Radi also said that at least 40 people were wounded, all civilians. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni expressed regret for the deaths, saying that Israel had not set out to harm innocent civilians. The IDF confirmed that an artillery battery containing 12 shells had aimed at a site from where Qassam rockets were fired at the southern city of Ashkelon the day before. The artillery fire had been intended for a location about half a kilometer from the Beit Hanoun houses. IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz appointed Maj. Gen. Meir Kalifi to head an investigation into the shelling. Soon after the attack, Minister of Defence Amir Peretz ordered the army to stop shelling Gaza, and called for a speedy investigation into the incident. Hours after the attack, Israel was placed on high security alert while Hamas swore revenge for the deaths, and called on all Palestinian groups to renew attacks inside Israel. Thirteen Qassam rockets were fired at southern Israel from Gaza following the shelling. One person sustained light wounds. (*AP, BBC, Ha'aretz*)

An IDF sniper shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian child in the northern town of Beit Lahia, locals reported. They said that Nimir Mohammed Abul Naji was hit with a bullet in the head that killed him instantly. (*The Palestinian Information Center*)

Israeli warplanes targeted the house of Ahmed Al-Jabari, the senior field commander of Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, firing air-to-surface missiles that reduced the house to rubble. Mr. Al-Jabari was not in the house at the time of the attack. Mr. Al-Jabari's family received a call from Israeli intelligence asking them to leave the house just 30 minutes before the attack. (*The Palestinian Information Center*)

Four local commanders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were shot dead by IDF troops in Kfar Yamoun near Jenin in the West Bank in the early morning. (*Ha'aretz*)

Palestinian sources reported that two Palestinians, Ahmad Awad Rajab and Ramzi Yousef Shheib, members of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, were killed in the Gaza Strip. The car they were in was completely burned from the blast since it reportedly carried homemade shells. (*IMEMC*)

Two Hamas members were killed and four others injured when the IDF opened fire on Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip. An air strike also targeted the car of a senior Hamas member in Rafah. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA President Abbas condemned Israel's "terrible massacres", which destroyed "all chances of peace." Political analyst Hani al Masri said that the continued Israeli offensive and the lack of political efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were jeopardizing President Abbas' peace efforts. "For Palestinian moderates, the recent Israeli operation in Gaza, the spilling Palestinian blood, indicated that Israel had nothing to offer other than force and that is pushing President Abbas to harden his positions", he said. (*AFP*)

The White House urged restraint after Israeli artillery shells killed 18 Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, and said it hoped for a swift completion of the investigation into the attack. "We deeply regret the injuries and loss of life in Gaza today. We have seen the Israeli Government's apology and hope their investigation will be completed quickly," said Gordon Johndroe, spokesman for the White House National Security Council. "We call on all parties to show restraint so as to avoid any harm to innocent civilians," he said. (*Reuters*)

In a press release, Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Margaret Beckett, said that she was gravely disturbed by the deaths of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, in an Israeli strike on Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip, in which at least 22 Palestinians were killed and many more injured. She extended her condolences to the families of those killed and the injured. She said: "The British Government has repeatedly expressed its deep concern over mounting casualties and civilian suffering in Gaza in recent months, and raised these concerns with the Government of Israel. Israel must respect its obligation to avoid harming civilians. It is hard to see what this action was meant to achieve and how it can be justified". However, she said: "Continuing rocket attacks by Palestinian militants are also unacceptable. I call on all sides to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law and to do their utmost to avoid harming civilians, especially children. (*Foreign and Commonwealth Office*)

The following statement was issued by the office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General was shocked to learn about the Israeli military operation carried out early today in a residential area in Beit Hanoun, which has resulted in the deaths of at least 18 Palestinians, including 8 children and 7 women. He extends his condolences to the bereaved families of the victims.

Only last Friday, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern about the rising death toll caused by the Israeli military operation in northern Gaza, given that such operations inevitably cause civilian casualties. The Secretary-General reminds both sides of their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General reiterates his call to the Israeli Government to cease its military operations in Gaza without delay and calls on the Palestinian side to also halt attacks against Israeli targets.

He further takes note of the reported announcement by the Israeli Government of a full investigation into this latest incident and looks forward to its early results.

(*UN press release SG/SM/10722-PAL/2062*)

John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, issued the following statement:

On 25 June 2006, Israel embarked on a military operation in Gaza that has resulted in over 300 deaths, including many civilians; over a thousand injuries; large-scale devastation of public facilities and private homes; the destruction of agricultural lands; the disruption of hospitals, clinics and schools; the denial of access to adequate electricity, water and food; and the occupation and imprisonment of the people of Gaza. This brutal collective punishment of a people, not a Government, has passed largely unnoticed by the international community.

The Quartet, comprising the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation, has done little to halt Israel's

attacks. Worse still, the Security Council has failed to adopt any resolution on the subject or attempt to restore peace to the region. The time has come for urgent action on the part of the Security Council. Failure to act at this time will seriously damage the reputation of the Security Council.

(Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

In a press release, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Karen AbuZayd, expressed shock and dismay at the killing of more Palestine refugees, many of them women and children, in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun this morning. She said that the morning's tragedy was yet more evidence, if any were needed, of the necessity to end this futile and provocative cycle of violence. Ms. AbuZayd had visited the centre of Beit Hanoun the previous day, shortly after Israeli forces left the area where she witnessed first-hand the despair of people trying to come to terms with death and destruction on a scale not seen in Gaza for many years. Israeli military ground forces had withdrawn from Beit Hanoun on Wednesday after a 6-day siege in which 50 had been killed. (www.un.org/unrwa)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa condemned Israel's "massacres" in the Gaza Strip and urged Arab leaders to send a strong message to Israel. He also said that the message from Israel is clear, that it will be stopped by no one and, as such, Arab countries must take up their responsibilities. Palestinian Permanent Representative at the Arab League Hussein Abdel Khaleq told reporters that it was decided that an emergency meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers would be held in Cairo on 12 November. (*AP, Reuters*)

The Arab League called for sending peacekeeping forces to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, *MENA* news agency reported. Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Occupied Arab Territories Affairs Mohamed Sobeih said, "We have been trying for the last two years to have peacekeepers sent to the Occupied Palestinian Territory." He expressed astonishment at the United States calling for sending UN troops to Darfur while ignoring Israel's aggression in the Gaza Strip. (*MENA, Xinhua*)

9

Israeli forces arrested nine Palestinians in the West Bank: four in Bethlehem, three in Nablus, one in Tubas and one in East Jerusalem. (*Wafa*) Seven Qassam rockets hit southern Israel. Three people were slightly injured and four others treated for shock when a rocket hit Sderot. (*Ha'aretz*)

Several thousand Palestinians in the Gaza Strip attended the funeral procession of the 19 Palestinian victims of Israel's attack on Beit Hanoun the day before. Maali Atamna, whose brothers, nephews, brother-in-law and sisters-in-law were killed, said: "One shell can be errant, two can be errant, but 20 shells cannot be errant." (*AFP, AP, BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Hundreds of Palestinians protested in East Jerusalem and residents shut down businesses. The march started from several schools and converged in the city center. Police used stun grenades to disperse the protesters and beat schoolchildren. (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

The spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, Abu Mujahid, said, "The retaliation for the Beit Hanoun massacre will be something else this time ... The operations will be to avenge the blood of the women and children." The leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmad Sa'adat, who was kidnapped from a PA Jericho jail in March 2006, was presented before an Israeli military court hearing and stressed that the retaliation for the Israeli action in Beit Hanoun should be the formation of a national unity Government and the enhancement of national unity, and that continuing the resistance is necessary. He called for factions who captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit to hold him until the last minute and to complete a prisoners deal under Palestinian conditions and terms. The Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, demanded that the Arab League hold an emergency meeting of foreign ministers. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a meeting called jointly by the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, the Security Council discussed the Israeli military operations in Beit Hanoun. Briefing the Council, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Angela Kane said, "While this incident [the Israeli shelling of a residential area in Beit Hanoun on 8 November] is unusual in scale, it is not the first time an Israeli military operation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has resulted in a high number of civilian casualties.... We see the [Israeli Government's] investigation as an opportunity for Israel to reflect not only on the obvious military and operational implications, but also on the policy of military pressure as a whole, which is quite clearly not producing the desired goal of stopping rocket attacks." More than 40 speakers, including the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, expressed grave concern at the mounting humanitarian toll, with many demanding an immediate ceasefire and deployment of United Nations observers. (*UN News Centre, UN press release SC/8865*)

Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül condemned the Israeli army strikes in the Gaza Strip that killed 19 civilians. "I strongly condemn this action ... This amounts to a massacre. Israel is making a mistake and opening the way to very dangerous developments in the region ... This cannot be accepted," he told parliament. Saudi Arabia also condemned the Israeli action and reiterated calls for an international conference to end the gruesome massacres and protect the Palestinian people. (*Reuters*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit condemned Israel's killing of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. "There should be an investigation into the massacre that took place yesterday in Beit Hanoun ... The issue should not be left to the Israeli armed forces to merely say that a mistake happened," he said. (*Reuters*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said that a 2005 truce with Israel was finished and appealed to all Palestinian factions to resume attacks. "There must be a roaring reactions that we avenge all those victims." (*AP*)

PA President Abbas spoke by telephone with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal, in the presence of Prime Minister Haniyeh, about efforts to form a national unity Government, according to PA Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh. "It was a good conversation that reflects a positive spirit that characterizes the discussions under way in Gaza aimed at creating a unity Government," he said. (*AFP, AP*)

A high-ranking official of the Hamas-led Government said the movement had presented to PA President Abbas four nominees for the post of Prime Minister: Zahir Khail, Muhammad Shubeir, Khalid Al-Hindi and Basim Na'im, the current PA Minister of Health. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said Arab foreign ministers would hold an emergency meeting on 11 November to look into practical steps and measures to deal with the ongoing and recurrent Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, the latest example of which is the Beit Hanoun massacre. (*AP*)

At the request of PA President Abbas, foreign ministers from seven Islamic States - Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Yemen - were to meet in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on 18 November to discuss this month's deadly Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip, the Organization of the Islamic Conference said. (*AFP*)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres said that now of all times, Israel must try and reach an agreement, not by itself, but indirectly through the Quartet and Egypt. "We have to see how to turn Gaza from a battlefield into negotiations... We have to see how to create a dialogue between the parties without an agreement," he said. (*Xinhua, Ynetnews*)

Israeli surveyors had started a land survey in Umm Salamuna village, south of Bethlehem. Villagers attempted to protest against this latest step by Israeli authorities. The head of the Land Defense Committee in Bethlehem, Khalid Azza, stated, "Israel is trying to build the separation wall on 152 dunums of land. These are agricultural lands, which the Palestinian villagers are depending on in their daily life." He added that this meant further lands would be separated behind the wall, in addition to the 7,500 dunums, which the wall had already taken from the area. (*Ma'an News*)

Agency)

The head of the Palestinian Monetary Authority said that the Palestinian economy was expected to shrink by at least 15 per cent during the year and would not recover unless "the economic siege" of the Hamas Government was lifted. (Reuters)

10

A Palestinian who was seriously wounded in Israel's shelling in Beit Hanoun on 8 November, Bassel Kafarna, 37, died of his injuries. His death brought to 19 the total number of Palestinians killed during the shelling. (AFP)

Israeli troops wounded a Palestinian gunman who had approached the border fence near the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing between Israel and the northern Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli sources said that Israeli forces had arrested 27 "wanted" Palestinians in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Qalqilya and Jenin. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, fired seven home-made projectiles at Israeli targets from the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF said that a general closure would be imposed on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

The United Nations Children's Fund spokesman Michael Bociurkiw said in Geneva that 19 Palestinian children had been killed in the past 10 days, making November already the second deadliest month of the year for young people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Bociurkiw estimated that more than 300 children had been injured this month by Israeli attacks. He said that 116 Palestinian children had been killed during the year, compared with 52 last year. (AP)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that talks with Fatah on forming a national unity Government had made progress and would resume next week. "The dialogue has made progress, and my meetings with the President yielded results. We have laid the groundwork for forming a national unity Government," he said during a Friday sermon in a Gaza mosque. "We have reached agreement with the Palestinian groups, between Hamas and Fatah, in order to resume the talks next week. We hope to have good news within two or three weeks," he added. Mr. Haniyeh also said that Hamas was not aiming to take seats in a Government, but wanted to lift the international economic boycott placed on the Palestinians since his Government took office. "If we have to choose between the siege and myself, we must lift the siege and end the suffering," he said. (AFP)

In an interview with *L'Unita* newspaper, Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema said that the United States should make resolving the Palestinian conflict its priority. He also said, "I truly believe that we have reached a state of emergency in the face of which we can no longer remain idle. It is urgent, and Europe must support this request, that Israel's military attack be halted.... The formation of a Palestinian Government of national unity is the only way to jump-start negotiations." He continued, "Once this Government is formed, a mechanism must be activated that passes through a Security Council resolution to resume the Road Map, giving it added legal force and accelerating its implementation. In order to impose a ceasefire, it is necessary to request the release of prisoners on both sides, to send in a team of international observers and to point out the accelerated stages of a negotiation process leading to a global peace agreement. And all this needs to hinge on a Security Council resolution, and the time factor is a crucial one." (Reuters, www.esteri.it)

11

"I tell my people that we have achieved great progress on the way to forming a national unity Government that can end the siege and open the horizons for political solutions that will end the occupation forever," PA President Abbas said. Moussa Abu Marzouq, Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief, following his talks with Fatah Secretary-General Farouk Kaddoumi, said that Hamas and Fatah had agreed on a candidate for PA Prime Minister, but declined to disclose the name of the candidate. (AP)

The Security Council voted on a draft resolution on Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip submitted by Qatar, which received 10 votes in favour, 1 against (United States of America) and four abstentions (Denmark, Japan, Slovakia and the UK), and was not adopted. "The American veto is very satisfactory. The draft resolution did not stipulate that what happened at Beit Hanoun was a tragic error," Israel Government Spokesman Avi Pazner told AFP. "We condemn this veto," said a spokesman for PA President Abbas, Nabil Abu Rudeineh. "We feel it will encourage Israel to continue its escalation against the Palestinian people." "This decision by the American administration clearly means the granting of absolute legitimacy to the massacre and slaughter committed by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people," PA Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad said in a statement. (AFP, UN News Centre)

"Peace and security will not be realized under occupation and settlement and the inclusion of noble Jerusalem into Israel," PA President Abbas said during a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Yasser Arafat. "Israel, if it wants peace, should apply international decisions and withdraw from Palestinian and Arab lands to the 1967 borders," he added. (AFP)

Some 800,000 Palestinian students returned to classes after the PA agreed to pay the teachers partial salaries, ending the work stoppage. (AP)

At an Arab League emergency meeting of Foreign Ministers in Cairo, PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said, "The Beit Hanoun region is a devastated zone which will require around \$50 million to rebuild all that was destroyed after the latest Israeli offensive, and to lend urgent and immediate help to the families of the martyrs and the wounded", adding, "I hope you will adopt a common Arab position, declaring the border of Rafah a Palestinian-Egyptian post only, as was asserted by Egypt recently". (AFP)

12

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian teenager near Beit Hanoun, PA officials said, after he entered an area that had been used earlier by militants to fire rockets at Israel. (AP, Xinhua)

Four Palestinian militant groups, including the Popular Resistance Committees, threatened to target United States interests and citizens following the US veto on a Security Council draft resolution on Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Resistance Committees claimed joint responsibility for firing rockets into Israel. (Xinhua)

Hamas and Fatah opened talks on allocating Cabinet seats in a national unity government. "All members of the new Cabinet must have two features. They must be honest and qualified," said Ismail Radwan, a spokesman for Hamas. (Reuters)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar told the *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper in an interview: "We will not recognize Israel. We do not want to repeat the mistakes made by Fatah when it recognized [Israel] and gave concessions." (AFP)

The Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo decided to withdraw from the aid freeze imposed on the PA. "We decided not to cooperate with it. There will no longer be an international siege," said Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa. "The Arab decision to lift the blockade is extremely important; it means that Arabs will revert to using the usual means to transfer aid [to the PA]," PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar told reporters. "We will build on this Arab decision to break the blockade to seek a lifting of the international blockade," he said. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar endorsed a statement by the Arab Foreign Ministers calling for a peace conference attended by Arab parties, Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council in order to reach a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict on all tracks according to international resolutions and the principle of land for peace. "A multilateral conference doesn't make Hamas legitimate," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev said. "What makes Hamas legitimate is accepting the international benchmarks." (AP)

Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero of Spain and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on the international community to act urgently against Israeli attacks on Palestinians. "It's not possible to accept what's happening in Palestine. Innocent people, women, children, and old people are killed," Mr. Erdoğan said during a news conference, adding, "The world can't stay silent against these atrocities, against this use of excessive force." Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero underlined the necessity for an "urgent" intervention by the international community to stop the Israeli bombings of the Palestinians. (AP)

13

A Qassam rocket landed in Sderot. No injuries were reported but a house was damaged. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF arrested 14 "wanted" Palestinians throughout the West Bank. (Ha'aretz)

An IDF statement said it had attacked a Palestinian facility used for storing weapons in the northern Gaza Strip. The Israeli Air Force carried out an attack in Gaza City, targeting the weaponry building there. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian identified as Baha' Salah Al-Khater, 26, when troops entered the Ein Beit Al-Ma refugee camp in the western part of Nablus, in the northern West Bank. Sources said the man was a member of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. (Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem said it had strong suspicions that the army had shot dead two unarmed Palestinians as they lay wounded during a raid a week earlier. The pair was among five Palestinians whose deaths were announced by the army following a raid in the village of Al Yamun, near the West Bank town of Jenin on 8 November. The IDF denied the allegations. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Some 710 Palestinians were being held in Israeli jails under administrative detention without trial, the Knesset Legislative Committee said. Deputy State Prosecutor Shai Nitzan said that the detainees were being held as a preventative action, to keep them from committing future crimes. (Ha'aretz)

Moussa Abu Marzouq, Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief, told AP that Hamas and Fatah had agreed that Mohammed Shabir, 60, former head of Gaza's Islamic University, should head the new PA Government. "No one has informed me officially of this designation. This report can become a reality only if President Abbas designates me officially as Prime Minister," Mr. Shabir told AP. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, in an interview published in the Palestinian daily *Al-Quds*, said that he was willing to talk to Hamas if it accepted the conditions presented by the international community. "The issue is not who is sitting in the [PA] Government but what the Government says," Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told *Israel Radio*. (AP)

In an interview with the Palestinian daily *Al-Quds*, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said peace would never be reached in the region, except by a two-State solution. He apologized for the "tragedy of Beit Hanoun," saying that it was not the goal to harm innocent people. (Ma'an News Agency) Following a White House meeting with US President George W. Bush, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said, "We and the Americans have been exchanging ideas that could allow positive developments regarding future negotiations between us and the Palestinians," adding that he remained attached to the Road Map. Mr. Olmert ruled out holding an international peace conference on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (AFP)

The European Union decided to extend the mandate of the European Union Border Assistance Mission for another six months and urged Israel to make sure the Rafah border terminal stayed open. (AFP)

According to the first report released by a UN-sponsored group called the Alliance of Civilizations, "The Israeli-Palestinian issue has become a key symbol of the rift between Western and Muslim societies and remains one of the gravest threats to international stability." The initiative, co-sponsored by the prime ministers of Spain and Turkey, was guided by a high-level group composed of eminent scholars, political and religious leaders, and was created in 2005 to find ways to bridge the growing divide between Muslim and Western societies. The report called for an international meeting of all concerned parties as soon as possible to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process, and urged the development of a white paper analyzing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dispassionately and objectively. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to whom the report was presented, said that as long as the Palestinians live under occupation, exposed to daily frustration and humiliation, and as long as Israelis are blown up in buses and in dance halls, so long will passions everywhere be inflamed. (AFP, *The Christian Science Monitor*, UN News Centre)

European Union Foreign Ministers, meeting in Brussels, were divided over their response to Israel's military tactics in the Gaza Strip. Diplomats said that the Czech Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom opposed publicly condemning Israel in a statement to be issued later. Ireland, Spain and Sweden wanted to issue a stern declaration to criticize Israeli military actions in Beit Hanoun. (AFP)

14

A Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed close to a children's dormitory in the western Negev. The attack caused slight damage to the building and a nearby factory. There were no casualties. The military wing of Hamas, the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. (Xinhua)

Israeli forces arrested 16 "wanted" Palestinians overnight. (www.idf.il)

A 21-year-old Palestinian, Mohammed Miqiz, died of wounds he had sustained during the attack by Israel on Beit Hanoun in the previous week. (Wafa)

A 17-year-old Palestinian girl and four boys were shot and wounded when Israeli soldiers opened fire at them in the Ein Betilma refugee camp, west of Nablus. (Wafa)

The Director of the Israel Security Agency, Yuval Diskin, said that Israel must prepare for a wide military confrontation in the Strip, if moderate sources in the PA do not get stronger. He added that Israel had no good options in Gaza; there were only bad options and they needed to choose the least bad of all. (AFP)

An initial agreement had been reached in talks on forming a new Palestinian Government. According to the agreement, Hamas would head 10 of the ministries while Fatah would hold 6. PA President Abbas said, however, that there had been no agreement with Hamas on naming Mohammed Shabir as Prime Minister. "There are no specific names for who will head ... but several names, so far no decision has been made on a specific person," Mr. Abbas said. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said that the agenda of the proposed national unity Government would not include recognizing Israel or accepting a two-State solution. "We reject the two-State solution, which is the vision of US President George Bush, because it represents a clear recognition of Israel," he said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said that the Hamas partnership in the PA Government was an unavoidable experiment which "revealed that the PA had no sovereignty and no strong basis in reality". He also said, "If Hamas has accepted to be in the opposition and to be a resistance faction only, that means the Hamas movement abandons responsibility ... Hamas cannot do that." He added, "We do not call on the Arabs to enter into regular warfare with Israel. We are calling upon them to launch a courageous initiative through which they can ensure the USA and the international community break the embargo imposed on the Palestinian people." (Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters)

Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chief Moussa Abu Marzouq said that Hamas would not recognize Israel even after a national unity government took over, but suggested that the emerging coalition would be free to stake out a more moderate position. "It is not Hamas that will pronounce on this subject," he said. Broader talks among all Palestinian factions were scheduled to begin early next week. (AP, Xinhua)

During a meeting between King Abdullah II of Jordan and PA President Abbas in Amman, King Abdullah affirmed his country's support for the consensus reached by the Palestinian people, underlining that it was important that all Palestinian forces must work to identify priorities in the coming stage for the sake of the Palestinian people. President Abbas said that the main objective of the Palestinian Government was to lift the siege on it and expressed the hope that it would be possible to move quickly to a new phase and commence a normal life in Palestine. (www.petra.gov.jo)

United States and European diplomats convened the first session of a security working group with Israelis and Palestinians meant to assure regular opening of the Rafah crossing, a participant said. The participant said that no significant progress had been made at the talks, but that another session of the group had been set for six weeks hence. The meeting was convened in Jerusalem by US Security Coordinator Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, and among those attending were Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat, Israeli Defence Ministry official Amos Gilad, and representatives from Egypt and the European Union, according to the participant. (AP)

The Foreign Ministry of Spain said that Spain had informed the United Nations that it was to unveil an initiative to revitalize efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos and UN Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Alvaro de Soto discussed the issue, adding substance to the stated desire of Spain to host an international peace conference on the Middle East, the Ministry said. (AFP)

The Jordanian Charity Fund would provide two new aid convoys comprising 33 trucks full of foodstuff to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, *Petra news agency* reported. A convoy of 11 trucks carrying 200 tons of food was due to arrive in two days, while the remaining trucks would arrive in a week. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

At the request of Bahrain, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and Pakistan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Human Rights Council was scheduled to hold a special meeting on 15 November to consider and take action on the "gross human rights violations" by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (DPA)

Palestinians were working on a project to produce natural gas in the Gaza Strip in the near future and sell it to Israel, local sources said. Talks were being held among Palestinians, Israelis and British Gas. *Ha'aretz* had earlier reported that Israel was ready to sign a deal with British Gas to purchase part of the natural gas produced in the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*)

15

An Israeli woman was killed and a man was seriously wounded by a Qassam rocket in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, close to the home of Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz. The woman was later identified as 57-year-old Fa'ina Slutzker, a resident of the town. The wounded man, who lost both legs, was identified as Mr. Peretz' 24-year-old bodyguard. Several people were treated for shock. Hours later, a 16-year-old boy was seriously wounded when another rocket slammed into the centre of the town. Fifteen rockets hit Israel's western Negev region over the course of the day: 4 in Ashkelon and 11 in Sderot. (*Ha'aretz*)

Three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire in Ramallah, security sources said. Rabih Harb, a member of Hamas' armed wing, was detained during the operation. The other two, who security sources said were civilians, were taken to hospital. (AFP)

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

PA President Abbas met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo and discussed the planned new Palestinian national unity Government and efforts to reactivate the peace process with Israel, presidential spokesman Suleiman Awad told reporters. "[President Mubarak] hopes the coming period will see a national unity Government that will speak with one voice and represent the Palestinian position, and lead to the activation of the peace process," Mr. Awad said. (AFP)

Two Hamas legislators crossed into the Gaza Strip from Egypt carrying \$4.2 million in their luggage. Legislator Mushir al-Masri, who brought in \$2 million, said that the funds would be registered with the Palestinian Finance Ministry. Another Hamas lawmaker, Ahmed Bahr, the deputy parliament speaker, came in with \$2.2 million. (AP)

The Quartet held a meeting in Cairo to discuss ways to revive talks between Israel and the Palestinians and to draw up a common response to a new Palestinian Cabinet, and ended without issuing a statement. The meeting was attended by US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs C. David Welch, as well as UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Alvaro de Soto, European Union Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process Marc Otte and the Russian Foreign Ministry Special Envoy for Middle East Settlement Sergey Yakovlev. After the meeting, Mr. de Soto told reporters that there were legal reasons why major donors found themselves unable to even engage with the current Government. Everyone was looking forward with great expectation, he said, to the results of the efforts led by President Abbas to form a new, agreed Government, one with which the international community would find it possible to engage further. (AFP, *Xinhua*)

The UN Human Rights Council voted by a clear majority to send an urgent mission to examine the impact of Israel's deadly attack on Palestinian homes in Beit Hanoun. The move came at a special session of the Council, which was called by Arab and Islamic States to debate human rights violations by Israel during its military offensive in the Gaza Strip. Thirty-two countries voted for the resolution, setting up the fact-finding mission and calling for a halt to the Israeli operation. Eight countries, including Canada and European nations such as Britain and Germany, opposed the move. Six countries, including France, Japan and Switzerland, abstained. (AFP)

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Louise Arbour told the Council that she would visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 19 to 24 November to examine developments on the ground. (AFP, www.ohchr.org)

16

Following yesterday's rocket strikes, the Israel Air Force attacked a number of buildings in the Gaza Strip after giving the residents advance warning.

A helicopter fired two missiles into the house of a militant in Gaza City. Neighbours said the occupant, a member of the Popular Resistance Committees, was not in the building at the time and there were no reports of casualties. A Hamas office and an arms storage facility in the town of Jabalya, north of Gaza City, were also attacked from the air, and similar facilities linked with the Islamic Jihad militant group were bombed in Rafah and Jabalya. Israeli army sources said that most of the 19 rockets fired the previous day were launched from the area around the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun. Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz consulted with senior defence officials after the deadly Sderot attack and decided that the IDF should step up its operations against the Qassam launch sites in Gaza. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was in Los Angeles, commented on the rocket attack by saying: "For a long time now, the IDF has been operating in the Strip, and just now it finished an operation in Beit Hanoun," adding, "the operation in Gaza will continue without a break ... and we will decide on additional steps to fight this murderous terror." (*Ha'aretz*)

IDF soldiers killed Mohammed Hmeidan, 25, in Beit al-Ma refugee camp, west of Nablus, security sources said. Medics said that Mr. Hmeidan was hit in the chest by an Israeli sniper with two live bullets and was killed on the spot. (WAPA)

Three Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip struck the western Negev, a day after a woman was killed and two other people were seriously wounded by rocket strikes on the town of Sderot. In the wake of the ongoing attacks, the Sderot student council announced that it would not allow the town comprehensive high school to open. The regional council of Sha'ar Hanegev also said that it would not open its elementary school until the beginning of next week. Two rockets had struck Sderot at around 7:30 a.m., Israel's *Channel 10* television reported, but did not cause casualties or

damage. Hamas claimed responsibility for the strikes, *Israel Radio* said. (*Ha'aretz*)

IDF troops arrested 11 Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Hebron, Jenin and Tulkarm, security sources said. The IDF broke into the towns of Doura and Ethna, south and west of Hebron, arresting five Palestinians. In Jenin, Israeli soldiers arrested five Palestinians in Qabatyia town, south of the city. In Tulkarm, the IDF arrested 22-year-old Nidal Abu Ali, witnesses said. (*Wafa*)

Israel foiled a suicide attack by an armed Palestinian. In a statement, the Israeli army said that the suicide bomber, Ashraf Khaled Hassin Hanani, 25, a resident of Beit Furik [in the northern West Bank], had been arrested by police on 17 November in Jerusalem while carrying a high-quality explosives belt. Three other Palestinians connected with the foiled suicide attack were subsequently arrested in the West Bank. The statement added that the attack was planned in full coordination with the Popular Resistance Committees in the Gaza Strip, which provided the West Bank cell with two explosives belts. (*AFP*)

Israeli troops arrested Mohammed Zytaweh, 27, a leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, in Tulkarm. Mr. Zytaweh held out for seven hours until an Israeli bulldozer began to demolish his house. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer called for stepped up "targeted killing" operations of Palestinian leaders involved in rocket attacks, one day after the first such deadly strike in more than a year. "Targeted killing operations must be broadened, not only against those who fire rockets but against their leaders," Mr. Ben-Eliezer told a public radio. (*AFP*)

In Girona, eastern Spain, President Jacques Chirac of France and Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of Spain announced that their countries were launching with Italy a European initiative seeking to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mr. Zapatero said that the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, would launch a diplomatic offensive to include all of Europe in the plan.

Mr. Zapatero proposed the initiative, which would be presented to the European Council in December, to President Jacques Chirac at a bilateral summit. Mr. Chirac said that France backed the proposal by Spain "without reservation." Mr. Zapatero said that he and Mr. Chirac had been in contact with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi and Mr. Solana, who had agreed with the plan. The proposal included a mission of international observers in Gaza and a peace conference, Mr. Zapatero said. The efforts would seek the immediate end of all violence, the formation of a Palestinian Government of national unity and an exchange of prisoners, he added. (*DPA*)

The PA welcomed the initiative unveiled by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero for an international peace conference on the Middle East. Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said that PA saluted the idea of organizing an international peace conference on the Middle East, especially as the Road Map made provision for holding such a conference. (*AFP*)

Israel rejected "out of hand" the Spanish-French initiative seeking to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Ha'aretz* reported. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was quoted as telling her Spanish counterpart, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, that Israel did not accept an initiative that was not coordinated with it in advance. An official quoted by *Ha'aretz* also said that Israel did not deal with private initiatives and worked only with the Quartet. (*DPA, Ha'aretz*)

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Jiang Yu, said that China was deeply concerned about the tensions between Israel and the Palestinians, and was paying close attention to the deteriorating human rights situation and humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She said that China called upon Israel to stop its military actions immediately, and hoped that the two sides would respond to the mediating efforts and prevent deterioration of the situation. (*Xinhua*)

In Strasbourg, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on EU member States to send international military observers into the Gaza Strip and urged Israel to end its military actions there immediately. The resolution, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority, condemned the Israeli army's use of disproportionate action, which is undermining attempts to initiate the peace process. It also called on Palestinian militias to put an end to the firing of rockets into Israeli territory, which is indiscriminate and deliberately targets civilians. It called for an immediate halt to the violation of international humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and urged Israel to lift its economic embargo on the Gaza Strip, adding that this move would benefit both sides. The resolution regretted the lack of a strong and clear stance by the international community on the current crisis. It called on Washington to reassess its role in the Quartet and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a view to supporting an end to the violence, and a new and genuine dialogue between the parties. The resolution called for the extension of the temporary funding mechanism of EU to aid poor Palestinians and called on the Israeli Government to resume the transfer of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. (*AFP*)

A day after attending a Quartet meeting in Cairo, US Assistant Secretary of State C. David Welch held talks in Amman with Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul-Ilah al-Khatib, in further diplomatic efforts aimed at reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. (*AP*)

In a press release, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms expressed its concern about Israeli threats to strike the site of *Palestinian TV* in Gaza City. It called on the international community, particularly human rights organizations, to pressure Israel to halt the threats, refrain from attacking the site and stop acts against journalists and media institutions. (*Wafa*)

In Tehran, after talks with Iran's top national security official Ali Larijani, PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar announced that Iran had stepped up its aid to the Palestinians by donating \$120 million to the Hamas-led Government and was ready to give more. The sum was more than double the pledge of \$50 million made by Iran last April. (*AFP*)

Noam Shalit, the father of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian militants, visited hospitalized Palestinian survivors of an Israeli artillery barrage, calling both peoples "victims of the same madness" and urging an end to the bloodshed. "I see here children lying wounded, unconscious children, broken children and to my sorrow, they are paying the price of these unnecessary wars. I call on the Government of Israel and the Palestinian leadership to stop this unending violence." (*AP*)

Only one in three people in Gaza had access to running water after the offensive by Israel in late June, and chronic illness, trauma and mental health cases increased sharply, Médecins du Monde reported. Western financial sanctions imposed after Hamas came to power, along with Israeli military strikes, had caused suffering and should stop, Médecins du Monde President Pierre Micheletti told a news conference. "Gaza is being intentionally kept on artificial respiration, and the population is suffering from collective depression", he said, adding, "We have seen a marked increase in chronic illness, trauma cases, premature birth, and mental health. ... Under these conditions it is hard to see how the population has an alternative to violence. That is my personal opinion." (*Reuters*)

17

Israel carried out air strikes in the Gaza Strip overnight, destroying four buildings belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad members. An IDF spokesman said three houses used by the armed wing of Hamas to store weapons were targeted in Jabaliya and Beit Lahia, north of Gaza City, and in Rafah in the south, near the border with Egypt, as well as a metal workshop in Khan Yunis, which Israel said belonged to the Islamic Jihad and was used to manufacture weapons. At least four residents were reported injured in the strike in Rafah. Israeli officers gave advance warnings to the homeowners in telephone calls shortly before the attacks. (*DPA*)

Two Qassam rockets were fired on the Negev, causing slight damage on a kibbutz but no injuries were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

Five people protesting against the wall, an IDF soldier and an Israeli Border Police officer were injured in a clash that began in Bil'in, west of Ramallah, after about 60 or 70 protestors, among them Israelis, Palestinians and foreign activists, refused to disperse as security forces had demanded. The Border Police and soldiers fired rubber bullets at the protestors, who were throwing stones at the security forces. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ha'aretz*)

Israeli troops conducting an arrest raid in Qalqilya opened fire at a crowd, killing three Palestinians. The IDF said a crowd of some 200 confronted

the soldiers shortly after they surrounded the home of a Hamas member in the town. As the crowd attacked the soldiers with rocks and firebombs, the soldiers responded with warning shots and live fire and a fire fight with Palestinian gunmen followed. The IDF said it received reports from Palestinian medics that 2 were killed and 11 wounded. Palestinian hospital officials said that more than 30 people were wounded, including 2 in critical condition. Another person died from his wounds later in the day. (AP, DPA, Reuters)

Israeli forces arrested 22 Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Qalqilya. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli missiles hit three targets in Gaza City from late in the day through the following morning. Among the targets was the home of Alaa Eatilam, the deputy director of the Executive Force, a branch of the security forces set up by Hamas after it took power. Mr. Eatilam lived about 500 yards from PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. Missiles also hit the second floor of a building housing a Hamas charity, Al Islah, destroying a library and offices and damaging a prayer room. North of Gaza City, a training camp of the Executive Force, deserted at the time, was hit. The IDF confirmed the strikes. (AP)

Khedr Habib, an Islamic Jihad leader, told PA President Abbas that the group would consider halting rocket attacks on Israel if Israel responded in kind. "[Mr.] Abbas said the truce is a national necessity" and "we said the truce must be mutual ... and part of a national consensus," Mr. Habib was quoted by the Islamic Jihad's website as saying. According to the website, another Islamic Jihad leader, Khaled al-Batch, also said that Mr. Abbas' proposal was worth studying. (Xinhua)

The General Assembly resumed its tenth emergency special session and adopted resolution ES-10/16, deploring Israeli military actions in Gaza, by a vote of 156 (including the 25-member EU) in favour, 7 against (Australia, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and the United States), and 6 abstentions, which included Canada. The draft resolution was introduced by Qatar on behalf of the Arab States. (AFP, UN News Center)

The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, welcomed the General Assembly's overwhelming support of resolution ES-10/16. He said the resolution sent a significant message to the Israelis that they have to comply with the law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Israel's Deputy Permanent Representative Daniel Carmon deplored the resolution that condemned Israel simply for fighting for its survival. (AFP)

The European Commission welcomed the Middle East peace initiative proposed by Spain, France and Italy. Any ideas which could give fresh impetus to the peace process were welcome, especially those giving the European Union an important role in a united international initiative, a Commission spokeswoman told a news conference. (DPA)

In further reactions to the European peace initiative, a spokeswoman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry said Israel preferred direct dialogue between the parties, rather than an international conference. Tzahi Hanegbi, Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, called the initiative superfluous, saying that an international observer force in Gaza would make Israel unable to take any action against rockets fired from the Gaza Strip. Speaking on *Israel Radio*, he also said the plan would bring a temporary false calm, during which militant groups would stockpile more rockets. (DPA)

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos said that there was nothing in the European peace initiative that Israel could reject. "We assume our responsibilities," he also said. "I knew that in the beginning there will be a negative reaction but I have full confidence that the initiative will go through." Spanish diplomatic sources described Israel's criticism of the initiative as respectable, but disputed its claim that it had not been consulted about the plan. Israel had been informed about the basics of the initiative, they said, and the plans to launch it were discussed at a Euro-Mediterranean Forum in Alicante in late October. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

Jean-Baptiste Mattei, a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry, said, "We think it is without doubt premature to speak of rejection" by Israel of the European peace initiative, as Israel had given no official reaction. He said that first of all, the Israelis must have a clearer understanding of what the initiative was all about. France wanted to continue to work on the plan, to present the ideas in greater detail, while speaking to all parties concerned, and then see the Israeli reaction. Spanish officials also said they were not worried about Israel's initial condemnation of the initiative, as wide-ranging contacts were under way to try to build momentum around the new plan. (AFP, AP)

United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair said in an interview with *The Washington Post* that new initiatives could be presented soon to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, adding that leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were among the nations eager for progress in resolving the conflict. This is an opportunity for us if we are prepared to seize it now," Mr. Blair said. *The Guardian* reported that Britain had not been informed of the new Middle East peace plan introduced by France, Italy and Spain, despite the call by Mr. Blair earlier during the week for a new strategy in the region. (AFP, AP, The Guardian)

B'Tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) called for an immediate military investigation into the deaths of two wounded and unarmed Palestinians shot during an IDF raid in Yamun, near Jenin in the West Bank, on 7 and 8 November. "B'Tselem's investigation indicates that Salim Abu al-Heijah and Mahmoud Abu Hassan were executed by soldiers while they lay wounded, unarmed and posed no risk to the soldiers," the group said in a report posted on its website. "Even if the operation in Yamun was part of combat rather than law-enforcement activities, as Israel often claims, the killing of the two men constituted a grave breach of the laws of war in international humanitarian law. These laws categorically prohibit wilful killing of combatants who can no longer defend themselves due to injury ... Such a killing is defined as a war crime," it said. In an official response to the report, the IDF said that its troops had entered the house only after being told by residents that there was no one left inside, and then discovered several suspected militants hiding there. "During the search, the troops identified several suspicious figures inside the structure and fired at them," the IDF said in a statement faxed to *Reuters*. (Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, speaking to reporters on his way back from the US, indicated his opposition to a large-scale offensive in the Gaza Strip. "There are many thoughts on how to deal with the Qassam rocket attacks, and we should remember that this is not a war with a 'quick fix' solution," Mr. Olmert was quoted as saying. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz asked the IDF to present a new plan for dealing with the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

The families of 19 Palestinians killed in an Israeli artillery strike in northern Gaza on 8 November said they planned to sue Israel for compensation. Seventeen of the dead were members of the same family, the al-Atamnas, who were killed, some of them while sleeping, when a volley of shells hit their house and several neighbouring ones in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza. Two neighbours from two other families were also killed and some 50 other people wounded. (DPA)

Kuwait granted \$30 million to the PA Presidency to pay the salaries of police and security services, according to Rafiq al-Husseini, of President Abbas' office. (AFP, AP)

18

Israeli soldiers shot two Palestinians dead and wounded three others in Umm Nasser village in the northern Gaza Strip: Said Hahjuj, 20, a member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (an earlier report by DPA identified him as Islamic Jihad member Mohammed Said Mahjoom, 22), and Thaer al-Masry, 16. The IDF said both victims were armed. (AFP, DPA)

Israeli gunfire hit an UNRWA elementary school in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, wounding two children. Ahmed Abdel-Aziz, 7, was hit in the head as he sat at his desk and suffered light wounds above his eye. A 12-year-old girl was shot in the leg as students were being evacuated from the building. "That there is not even safety in an UNRWA school sends a very clear message that ties in to what the General Assembly thankfully voted on, which is that there is a need to protect the civilians in Gaza," said John Ging, the Agency's Gaza field director. "There is

disproportionate use of force and due care is not being taken for the civilian population,” he added. The IDF spokesman’s office said a thorough investigation showed there was no Israeli gunfire in that area on that day. According to an UNRWA statement: “Both bullets entered the school from the north, and Israeli tanks were stationed on a hill 1.5 km north of the school.” (AFP, AP, UNRWA press release HQ/G/18/2006)

Palestinian medical sources announced the deaths of two Palestinians, days after they had been wounded in IDF operations in the northern Gaza Strip.

The dead included a woman who was critically wounded when a tank shell exploded near a bus carrying her and a number of children to the kindergarten where she worked. Another man died while receiving treatment in an Egyptian hospital. (Xinhua)

A Palestinian force trained and based in Jordan was preparing for deployment in the Gaza Strip as part of efforts to restore security in the territory. “The Badr force is getting ready to be deployed in the Gaza Strip”, said Atallah Khairy, the PA Ambassador in Amman, adding, “We hope that this will take place before the end of the year.” No final decision had yet been taken, he said. (AFP)

Egypt’s Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit welcomed the adoption of a General Assembly resolution ES-10/16 the previous day, MENA reported.

He expressed satisfaction with the EU support for the resolution but said he regretted the US opposition to it despite the inclusion of a direct appeal to the Palestinian side to halt firing missiles at Israel. (Xinhua)

“The General Assembly’s stance was only condemnation and denunciation,” PA Cabinet spokesman Ghazi Hamad said, demanding a resolution that was more serious by imposing sanctions on Israel. PA Interior Minister Said Siyam said it was an unjust resolution that equalizes between the victim and the executioner. (Xinhua)

Israeli Government spokesman Avi Pazner described General Assembly resolution ES-10/16 as “unbalanced and ... inapplicable, since it does not take into consideration the reason for the Israeli military operations, which come as a response to terrorist attacks”. The vote was an expression of “the anti-Israeli majority” in the General Assembly, he also said. A spokeswoman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry said that some “forces” were trying to take the UN hostage and “deny [Israel’s] right to exist.” (AFP, DPA)

Israel’s Deputy Prime Minister Avigdor Liberman, speaking to *Israel Radio*, said he believed that the Palestinians were interested not in setting up a State of their own, but rather in destroying Israel. “A continuation of Oslo, of the Road Map ... will lead us to another round of conflict, a much more bloody round, and in the end to an even deeper deadlock, and it threatens our future,” he said. He dismissed PA President Abbas as an ineffective leader who should be ignored, and said Israel must get tougher with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, particularly their leaders. “They ... have to disappear, to go to paradise, all of them, and there can’t be any compromise,” he said. (AP)

Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib welcomed the European peace initiative as indicative of the world’s “serious interest” in the region’s affairs, according to an official statement. *Petra* said Mr. Khatib’s remarks came during a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Middle East Envoy Alexander Sultanov. The two officials also discussed the Russian President’s proposal for convening an international conference on the Middle East and revealed plans for President Putin to visit the Middle East in February 2007. (DPA)

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, said in a press statement that the League was ready to cooperate with the EU on holding a peace conference to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, MENA reported. Mr. Moussa said that a European meeting would be held next week to further develop the European proposal. He also welcomed a Kuwaiti offer of \$30 million in aid to the Palestinians, saying that other Arab countries would offer more funds to the Palestinians soon. (Xinhua)

A meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah, called for by PA President Abbas to discuss Israel’s ongoing offensive in Gaza, decided to break the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people, according to a statement. (AFP)

PA President Abbas held his first meeting with Mohammed Shabir, the former university president expected to head an emerging national unity government. Hamas and Fatah negotiators said they were discussing the distribution of Cabinet ministries. (AP)

19

Three Israelis were wounded, one of them seriously, when rockets fired from the Gaza Strip hit Sderot. The two rocket attacks also damaged several buildings in the town. The Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed responsibility. (AP, AFP)

Israel called off airstrikes on two houses in the Gaza Strip after hundreds of Palestinian protestors crowded around the buildings. Israeli telephone calls gave residents 30 minutes to vacate the houses, but instead of leaving, the homeowners remained inside and were quickly joined by crowds of supporters who gathered on balconies, rooftops and on the streets outside. The first incident occurred just before midnight at the home of Mohammed Barud, a leader of the Popular Resistance Committees, in the Jabalya refugee camp. The second one occurred about two hours later at the home of Mohammed Nawajeh from Hamas. PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh visited Mr. Barud’s home to support the protest. “This is a victory for the Palestinian people. It is a defeat for the Israeli F-16s,” said Mr. Barud, 33, adding, “Every time they call from now on, no one will leave their homes”. (AFP, AP)

A missile fired by an Israeli aircraft blew up a car in Gaza City, killing an elderly man nearby and wounding eight, including three children. The Israeli military said the vehicle was carrying senior members of a Hamas rocket-launching operation. Witnesses said the attack took place near a mosque at Gaza City’s Zeitoun neighbourhood as worshippers were leaving prayers. The intended target of the strike – two Hamas members – managed to leap out of the car seconds before the missile hit it, but shrapnel from the explosion killed an old man on a donkey cart which was passing by at the time. (AFP, AP, DPA, Reuters)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert criticized General Assembly resolution ES-10/16, which was adopted on 17 December. “I view it severely,” he told the weekly Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem. “We have no doubt that it is the State of Israel which must respond to attacks on civilians. We have expressed our deepest regret over this. But those who preach morality and roll their eyes have yet to see fit to initiate a resolution in condemnation of those who are shooting with the goal of hitting civilians as a long-range, systematic policy.” “France would not do those a favour who fire missiles at its own cities. Support for this resolution means doing terrorists a favor,” Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Dan Gillerman told *Israeli Public Radio*. (AFP)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said that the participation of Hamas in a national unity government depended on guarantees that Western economic sanctions would end once a new administration was in place. “There are letters, there are messages, there are talks from here and from there but ... we want to document these letters, we want to feel more secure, to be more comfortable that they are going to be committed to these guarantees and lift the siege,” he told reporters. “We are not going only for a photo opportunity. We want to lay the basis for real national unity, for a real political partnership. Therefore, the United States, the Europeans and our brothers, the Arabs, must shoulder their full responsibility to end the siege of the Palestinian people.” (AP, Reuters)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz telephoned PA President Abbas to urge him to intervene to stop persistent rocket attacks on Israel. (AFP)

Former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia arrived in Syria for talks with Syrian President Bashar Assad. Mr. Qureia told reporters upon his arrival that his visit came in the framework of continued consultations with Syria and President Assad on the Palestinian situation, and on developments towards forming a Palestinian national unity Government. Mr. Qureia also met Khaled Meshaal, Hamas Political Bureau Chief, the following day, who told reporters afterwards that the climate had been positive. He expressed hopes that the current talks would lead to the announcement of a national unity government, and serious steps to rebuild the PLO. (DPA)

20

Dozens of Palestinians gathered in the home of Wael Rajab in Beit Lahya in the northern Gaza Strip to prevent a threatened Israeli attack. Neighbours, friends, relatives and bystanders huddled into the home of Mr. Rajab, a member of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing

of Hamas, after the IDF ordered his family to evacuate the property ahead of an air raid. (AFP)

Hamas and Fatah suspended negotiations over the formation of a national unity Government. PA President Abbas was said to have walked out of the talks in Gaza after Prime Minister Haniyeh said he wanted Hamas to retain the Finance and Interior Ministry posts, while Fatah wanted independent experts to take them over. Nabil Amr, Mr. Abbas' media adviser, told reporters in Ramallah that the talks had been suspended. He said that the only progress achieved during the thousand hours of dialogue had been the agreement on the Prime Minister. He confirmed that Mohammad Shabir, the former head of the Islamic University in Gaza, had been the candidate. (Reuters)

UNHCHR Louise Arbour, at the beginning of her five-day tour of the Middle East, said human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were "massive". In a brief visit to the site of a deadly Israeli shelling in the Gaza Strip, during which she also met PA President Abbas, Ms. Arbour listened to the accounts of local residents about the Israeli offensive during the month against Beit Hanoun where some 80 people had been killed. She told reporters that the violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories were intolerable and explained that her visit had been to express UN condolences and show concern for civilians. "I think it's clear that civilians are tremendously exposed." (AFP, AP, Reuters)

UNRWA issued an urgent appeal for \$2.5 million to ease the "humanitarian disaster" caused by Israel's assault on the town of Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip, which left 82 Palestinians dead, including 39 women and children, 260 wounded and "more wanton destruction" earlier in the month. (UN News Center)

Yitzhak Cohen (K-Shas), a Minister without portfolio in Israel's Cabinet, told the *Israeli Public Radio*, "For the moment there is no military solution to the Qassam fire problem on Israel from the Gaza Strip and therefore the deployment of a multinational force needs to be considered. ... This model has worked in Lebanon." Pensioner Affairs Minister Rafi Eitan also said on the radio that Israel should try to reach a truce with PA President Abbas, "We don't want to dominate another people and we left the Gaza Strip ... We need to make a ceasefire agreement and need to see if Abu Mazen is capable of implementing it." (AFP)

21

Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinians, a militant and a civilian, during a ground raid in south-east Gaza City, witnesses and medical officials said. Wael Hassanein, 31, a top commander of the Hamas movement, was shot in a gunbattle as IDF troops, backed by around 30 armoured vehicles, entered his home in the Zeitoun district. During the attack, Sadeya Herezz, a 70-year-old Palestinian woman, was also killed. Palestinian security officials said the troops also arrested a member of the Hassanein family before withdrawing. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

Unknown militants abducted ICRC aid workers Claudio Moroni, 36, and Gianmarco Oronato, 63, nationals of Italy, near the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis, Palestinian security officials said. They were abducted when gunmen blocked the taxi in which they were travelling and forced them into another vehicle, which then sped away. (DPA)

In Sderot, an Israeli was critically wounded when a Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit the factory in which he was working. A second rocket hit a house in the town, and two more landed in open fields nearby. The rockets struck as UNHCHR Louise Arbour was visiting the town, as part of a five-day tour of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (Ha'aretz)

Eleven Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun, local medical and security sources said.

An Israeli helicopter fired a missile towards a group of Palestinians gathered in Beit Hanoun, saying that militants used the town to launch rockets on Israel. (AFP)

Israelis threw stones at the car of UNHCHR Louise Arbour at the site of a Palestinian rocket attack near the town of Sderot. As the UN High Commissioner arrived in the town, a rocket fired from Gaza exploded in an adjacent industrial zone, seriously wounding a man and causing a fire that sent plumes of black smoke into the sky, a police source said. Ms. Arbour went to visit the scene of the latest Palestinian attack but as she left, workers stoned her convoy in protest, shouting angrily and striking her car but not causing any casualties. She later sat for two hours with Sderot residents, listening to their descriptions of life on the frontline of Palestinian rocket attacks. A day earlier, the UN High Commissioner had visited the site of an Israeli shelling in Beit Hanoun, saying that protecting civilians in the entire region was an absolutely critical issue. She called on Israel to look for "partnership" to build a sustainable atmosphere for peace. Ms. Arbour said that Israel had responsibility for its citizens by legal means, in respect of international law, including international humanitarian law and added that it had to look for support and partnership to build an atmosphere where peace would be sustainable. She said she believed that other measures were very short term. (AFP)

Hamas spokesman Abu Obayed warned Israel to either call off military strikes or "empty Sderot of its residents." He added that the range and quality of Qassam rockets had improved. (Ha'aretz)

Palestinian Legislative Council member and Head of the Palestinian National Initiative Mustafa Barghouti said that the national unity Government would be agreed upon by the end of November. He said in a press conference that the atmosphere was positive, as everyone was looking for a common ground. (Ma'an News Agency)

A report issued by Peace Now said that nearly 40 per cent of the land on which settlements were located had been seized from private Palestinian owners, with much of it seized since the practice was outlawed in 1979. The report challenged the Government's claims that it had stopped the land seizures decades ago. Peace Now said its charges were based on information leaked from the Civil Administration, the Israeli military department responsible for administering civil affairs in the West Bank. The Supreme Court, which in 1979 ordered the Government to stop confiscating private land for settlements, had not ruled on Peace Now's petition to have the data released under freedom of information laws. "We are talking about an institutional land grab," said Dror Etkes, a settlement expert with Peace Now. (AP)

22

An Israeli worker who was injured by a Qassam rocket that hit a building in Sderot the day before died of his wounds. (Ma'an News Agency)

Two Palestinians were killed by IDF in the Gaza Strip. They were identified as Sami Anwar al-Zibda, 22, a member of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, and Musaad Abu Matiq, 35. (AFP, DPA, Xinhua)

Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, including two Hamas member and two civilians. Massad Ahmed, 35, was reportedly killed by shrapnel when Israeli artillery targeted a training site for the Palestinian Interior Ministry's auxiliary forces. The other man, also reportedly to be a Hamas member, was shot in the Jabalya refugee camp. Hospital officials said a Palestinian woman, 35, was killed by Israeli shelling in an area used by rocket crews, and that troops killed a 14-year-old boy in a nearby refugee camp. (DPA, Reuters)

A Palestinian was killed and another injured in Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank. A special IDF unit ambushed the two and shot them. Fadi Imour, 27, a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and Asharf Saadi, a member of Saraya al-Quds, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, were both injured in the shooting but were able to get away. Mr. Imour, who was shot in the stomach, later died in hospital while Mr. Saadi received moderate injuries and survived. (AP, DPA)

The two Italian aid workers, Claudio Moroni and Gianmarco Oronato, abducted the day before by unknown militants and held for eight hours in the Gaza Strip, had been released. (AFP)

During an Israeli military incursion in the Gaza Strip, three Palestinians students were injured in Beit Hanoun. In addition, one Israeli soldier was seriously injured when he was hit by an anti-tank projectile. (AFP, Ma'an News Agency)

Israel's security Cabinet said in a statement that it would continue with military raids and targeted killings in the Gaza Strip, but ruled out a large-scale offensive to counter Palestinian rocket attacks. "We need simultaneously to strengthen protection against rocket fire, strike the terrorists punctually, develop technological ways to intercept rockets and search for a political solution," Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres said. (AFP, Ha'aretz,

Reuters)

Israel was proceeding with plans for a high-tech shield from rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, IDF officers and Defence Ministry officials said. Reuven Pedatzur, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University and defence commentator for *Ha'aretz*, said none of the systems would be practical in the near future and investing in their development would be a waste. The military was looking into the systems, he said, merely to show the public that it was doing something. "The only way to deal with the rocket threat is to either recapture every inch of the Gaza Strip or make peace," Mr. Pedatzur said. (AP)

Spokesman for the Palestinian Ministry of Interior Khalid Abu Hilal announced that the Ministry would take all necessary steps to arrest anyone involved in the abduction of foreigners in the Gaza Strip. In a press conference in Gaza, he said that the Ministry had never responded to the demands of abductors, but had entered into dialogue with them. He added that the Palestinian security services had enough information about the people involved in these kidnappings, and those who had disappeared would be pursued by Interpol. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades had issued statements claiming responsibility for continued launching of homemade projectiles at the southern Israeli towns of Sderot and Zikim. The two armed groups said separately that the launching was part of their retaliation for Israeli acts against Palestinians. (Ma'an News Agency)

ICRC issued a report in which it revealed a significant deterioration of the household economies in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip over the last four years. Dominik Stillhart, head of the ICRC delegation for Israeli and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said, "This confirms the fears expressed repeatedly by the ICRC concerning the consequences in humanitarian terms of the economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza... Humanitarian assistance alone, in whatever form, will not solve the problem in a sustainable way. It is the responsibility of the State of Israel, as the occupying Power, to ensure that Palestinians can meet their basic needs." (Ma'an News Agency, www.icrc.org)

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said it was still too early for a Middle East peace conference. In a joint conference with Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif, he said that the initiative of the French and Spanish Governments was premature. "We must take up concrete actions to extend our commitment to the UK and Germany. I say the peace conference must come after a process that envisages more observers in Gaza and the resumption of normal life. That must be the first step, then we would be able to think about further measures", he added. (AGI, Ma'an News Agency)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, speaking to journalists in Damascus, confirmed that the talks between Fatah and Hamas had been postponed for a few days. He said, "We have been talking about a national unity government, now a technocrat Government was presented on the table. It seems that there would be no Fatah or Hamas representatives in this Government. This is a new step that complies with the Quartet demands." With regard to a deal to exchange prisoners and release the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, he added, "We want to solve this humanitarian issue. There are more than ten thousand Palestinian prisoners involved. Some of them have been in Israeli jails for more than 25 years." (Ma'an News Agency)

23

An Israeli airstrike killed Mahmud al-Bassiuni and Fayege Abu Al-Qumsan of the Popular Resistance Committees. A missile struck the car they were driving in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF confirmed it had carried out an attack. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Ala Omar Khalil, 20, was shot dead by Israeli ground troops near Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip. (AFP)

Two Palestinians, Hamas and Islamic Jihad members, were killed by Israeli tank fire in Beit Lahia. Medical sources named one as Mohammed al-Jarjawi, 20. An IDF spokeswoman said troops had opened fire on a suspicious person, but was unable to say if the person was armed. Four Israeli soldiers were wounded by anti-tank missiles, the IDF said. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Fatma Omar An-Najar, 64, blew herself up as Israeli forces were moving through the Jabalya refugee camp north of Gaza City. The troops spotted a woman acting suspiciously, IDF said. The soldiers threw a stun grenade, and then Ms. An-Najar set off the explosives she was carrying, killing herself and lightly wounding two of the troops. Her oldest daughter Fatheya said, "They [Israelis] destroyed her house, they killed her grandson – my son. Another grandson is in a wheelchair with an amputated leg." (AFP, AP)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal, who had arrived to Cairo overnight along with two members of the Bureau, held talks with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, focusing on prisoner exchange between Hamas and Israel, Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas member, said in Damascus. "The delegation ... will follow up on Egyptian efforts to reach a deal acceptable to the Palestinian people. The atmosphere is positive." (Reuters)

Abu Hamza, a spokesman for the Islamic Jihad, announced that a longer-range rocket it was developing would soon be operational, but did not say when. (AP)

"I think any initiative that really is a positive stepping stone towards mitigating the conflict and towards peace is certainly to be seen positively," EU Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner said, adding, "But we have to find a united position, because only then we can make a difference." (Reuters)

Meretz Member of Parliament Yossi Beilin came up with a Middle East peace initiative called "Mapping the road from realignment to permanent status". "We are on the verge of a [diplomatic] development in the region," he told reporters in Jerusalem, adding that both sides realized that "violence won't work". (AFP)

South Africa's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad called on Hamas and Fatah to urgently set up a national unity Government. "This is the only basis on which the international community will reassess the sanctions policy and indeed create the climate for normalization of relations with the Palestinian authorities, which will then allow for a better climate to find the peaceful solution, based on the two-State solution," Mr Pahad told reporters in Pretoria. "We regret that violence continues – rocket attacks from Palestine into Israel – which is then met with unprecedented military action from the Israeli side and we hope this can be brought to a stop," he also said. (BuaNews/All Africa Global Media)

Twenty-three disabled Palestinian athletes may be prevented from travelling to Malaysia for an international competition. While 10 members of the Palestinian contingent had arrived in Malaysia the previous day, the rest of the team was stranded in Gaza due to a curfew imposed by Israel and may miss the weeklong Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled, which begins on 25 November, team member Khaled Fararja was quoted as saying by Bernama. (AP, Bernama)

24

A 10-year-old Palestinian child and Ayman Juda, 22, a Hamas cameraman from the faction's armed wing, who was filming Hamas fighters in action, were killed by Israeli fire in Jabalya in the Gaza Strip. Two Israeli soldiers were slightly wounded by an explosive device during fighting in northern Gaza. (AFP, Reuters)

Four Palestinian rockets exploded inside Israel, causing damage to a commercial centre in Sderot. (AFP)

A spokesman for the Islamic Jihad extended the offer to stop rocket attacks in exchange for an end to Israeli offensives in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, following an overnight meeting among Palestinian factions. Israel rejected the offer as inadequate, with Israeli Government spokeswoman Miri Eisin telling AFP, "The suggestion concerns a partial ceasefire, limited to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip in exchange for a total halt to Israeli operations on all fronts. This is not serious." However, she said that Israel would be open to a comprehensive proposal. PA

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that the ball was now in the Israeli court. "It must stop its aggression and escalation against the Palestinian people; then there will be no problem according to what the factions agreed in their last meeting." Independent Member of Parliament Mustapha Barghouti called the Israeli reaction very discouraging, adding, "Israel is responsible for the cycle of violence. Each time Palestinians want an end of violence, Israel refuses. Israel is the one that does not want to stop the cycle of violence." (AFP, AP, DPA)

"Mr. Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] has started putting new conditions which were not included in the understandings and agreements we have concluded to form a unity government," a Hamas statement said. "The issue of calming down armed resistance was not on the table and should not be raised at this time. Hamas had announced it is ready to stop rocket attacks if Zionist aggression and assassinations stop." Yasser Abed Rabbo, a senior aide to Mr. Abbas, said Hamas had invented the idea that the President was imposing new terms, saying they had been on the table for months. (AP, Reuters)

In his first interview since taking up the post in March 2006, Lt.-Gen. Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator between Israel and the Palestinian Authority told *Yediot Ahronot* that Iran was helping arm and fund Hamas, while the US wanted to prevent "moderate forces" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from being eliminated. "We are involved in building up the Presidential Guard, instructing it, assisting it to build itself up and giving them ideas. We are not training the forces to confront Hamas." "We have money to train the presidential guard to work the Karni crossing, and the aim is to open the crossings like last year with 400 trucks going into Israel every day," Gen. Dayton said. The US had envisioned the guard to eventually taking control of all border crossings, including those in the West Bank. The plans called for expanding the force initially to around 4,700 members, up from 3,500 currently, while PA officials estimated that the force could eventually grow to 10,000 members. (Reuters)

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi and French President Jacques Chirac, meeting in the Italian town of Lucca, reaffirmed their backing for the Middle East peace initiative launched by their countries and Spain last week. Both Messrs. Prodi and Chirac said the plan, to be fully revealed next month, needed to be endorsed by the United Kingdom and Germany to be effective. They also called for the formation of a Palestinian national unity government, saying it would help end the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip and open the door for peace efforts, such as their peace initiative. (AP)

UNRWA billed the Israeli Government \$28 million for port and container charges that it said it should never have had to pay. "The delays and the unrightfully collected port charges are the equivalent of food aid provided by the agency to all of Gaza in 2005," said UNRWA spokesman Matthias Burchard. "It is causing us huge losses and leaving a big gap in our budget, which is a serious problem." The sum had been paid out on charges for supplies coming through Ashdod Port in Israel during the past 10 years. The remainder was the cost paid to haulage companies for containers delayed at the Karni border crossing, which UNRWA was also claiming back from Israel. "Ashdod is the only practical point of entry for these goods. There is no real alternative," Mr. Burchard said, adding that the Israelis had failed to honour agreements granting UNRWA immunity from the charges. UNRWA had also been forced to finance the replacement trucks damaged by Israeli bullets. (DPA)

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PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh agreed, with all Palestinian factions, to a ceasefire, including a halt to launching homemade rockets from the Gaza Strip. The truce was to start the following day at 6 a.m. Nabil Abu Rudeineh, President Abbas' spokesman, told a press conference in Gaza that President Abbas called Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and informed him about the agreement. Mr. Abu Rudeineh said that Mr. Olmert agreed to withdraw Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and stop military operations there. He said President Abbas asked Mr. Olmert to stop the military operations in the West Bank to keep the mutual and reciprocal calm. (Wafa)

An Israeli drone targeted a car in the Gaza suburb of Shujaiya, killing two Palestinians and seriously wounding two others. Witnesses and medics said Mohammed al Abdullah was killed instantly when an Israeli aircraft targeted his car with a missile. (Palestinian Information Centre, Wafa)

Medical sources in Hebron said that Jihad Farroukh, 15, was critically wounded by IDF soldiers after being hit in the head with a rubber coated bullet.

He was wounded in Sa'eer town, near Hebron city. Meanwhile, the IDF arrested three Palestinians in the village of Beit Owla, north of Hebron.

In Nablus, IDF soldiers entered a local TV station in the Old City and arrested four employees, security sources said. Sources also said that the IDF had blown up the houses of Ghassan Madmouj and Omar al-Saeh in the neighbourhood of Alqisariyya. (Wafa)

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In the West Bank, Israeli soldiers entered the town of Beitunia, west of Ramallah, detaining Mohammed Kaddora, 30, who was arrested at his home.

In Kufr Dan village, west of Jenin, IDF troops launched a house-to-house search for "wanted" Palestinians. Atef Tash, 16, was hit by a shrapnel in his head as a result of intensive IDF firing in residential areas. In Al-Khalil city, three Palestinians, including two Hamas members, were detained by IDF troops. (Palestinian Information Centre)

Palestinians in the West Bank threw a firebomb at an Israeli car near Nablus. There were no injuries in the incident. Also, Palestinians threw stones at another Israeli car south of Hebron, damaging the vehicle. (Ha'aretz)

Three Qassam rockets hit Israel in the first few hours after a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip went into effect, causing no damage or injuries. The military wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility. They said the rocket fire was in response to the arrest of two Hamas members in Hebron, despite earlier pledges not to violate the truce in response to West Bank incidents, and despite the fact that the arrests took place prior to 6 a.m. One of the rockets hit Sderot, the second fell in an open area north of the town, and the third landed close to a local kibbutz. A senior official in Jerusalem said Israel would wait several hours to see if the attacks were isolated breaches or a full-scale violation of the agreement before deciding whether to respond. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat condemned the rocket attacks. "This is a violation and [President Abbas] calls it a violation, and urges all to abide by the agreement that should be honoured for the interest of the Palestinian people," he said. Despite the claims of responsibility, a spokesman for the Hamas-led Palestinian Government, Ghazi Hamad, said all the armed groups were committed to the agreement, and any violations were rogue acts. "There is a 100 per cent effort to make this work, but there is no guarantee of 100 per cent results," Mr. Hamad said. Defence Minister Amir Peretz, however, said any attempt to fire into Israel would be considered a breach of the ceasefire and treated with severity. Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip also fired at least three Qassam rockets at Israel in the minutes before the ceasefire went into effect. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attacks. One hit a house in Sderot, causing damage but no injuries. The other two Qassams landed at the entrances to kibbutzim in the western Negev, causing no damage or injuries. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli Government sources in Jerusalem said they believed US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would visit Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 29 November as an expression of US support for the Gaza ceasefire. (Ha'aretz)

During a trip to the Negev, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said, "The State of Israel is so strong that it can allow itself to hold back, to give a real chance to the ceasefire. After all, a ceasefire is not the supreme goal. It is only a stage in the process, which we hope will create the dynamic that will lead to negotiations and dialogue, and perhaps will finally bring about an agreement between us and the Palestinians." Mr. Olmert also said that Israel would display patience and restraint in the face of Palestinian violations of a ceasefire that had gone into effect earlier in the day. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas received a phone call from EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. Mr. Abbas briefed Mr. Solana on the latest developments in the Palestinian territory, including the agreement between the Palestinians and Israel and the efforts to form a national unity Government. (Wafa)

IDF troops in the Gaza Strip received a direct order from Chief of Staff Dan Halutz to avoid opening fire against any Qassam rocket crews. Before the ceasefire actually went into effect, nine rockets were fired into Israel, and the IDF did not respond. Starting at 10 a.m. all attacks

ceased. In army circles, and particularly at IDF Southern Command, there was a great deal of scepticism about the agreement. Senior officers had warned that without enforcement and an end to the smuggling of weapons through tunnels from Sinai to Rafah, the ceasefire was a dangerous development, maintaining that Hamas was making a tremendous effort to arm itself. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA security forces began deploying along the Gaza Strip's border with Israel in order to prevent Palestinians from firing Qassam rockets at Israel in violation of the ceasefire. Earlier, PA President Abbas ordered the heads of Palestinian security forces to ensure that armed Palestinians in Gaza respected the truce, Palestinian officials said. (*Ha'aretz*, *Wafa*)

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A Palestinian gunman and a woman were killed in an Israeli army operation in the West Bank town of Qabatyia near Jenin, security and medical sources said. Nasser Abdel Razek, 25, a local head of the Popular Resistance Committees, died in an exchange of fire with Israeli soldiers, the sources said. The woman, aged 50, who was a neighbour of Mr. Abdel Razek, was accidentally killed as she rushed to help, they added. In response, and despite the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, militants from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades fired two rockets into Israel in violation of the ceasefire. (*AFP*)

Two rockets, the first being fired in over 24 hours, landed in an open area in the western Negev, causing no injuries. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility. (*Xinhua*)

The Army of Islam, a Palestinian group that had claimed responsibility for the capture of IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit, refused to abide by a ceasefire with Israel, according to an Internet statement. A cell in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades also said it did not respect the truce and threatened to launch rockets into Israel unless a 20-year-old Palestinian woman, Iman Abu Turki, was released. Her family accused Israeli settlers of kidnapping her near the "Beit Haggai" settlement in the southern West Bank. "We, the unified military wing of Fatah, declare to those who signed the agreement for the calm with the Zionist entity, that we are not involved," Abu Saqer, spokesman for the previously unknown group, told a news conference.

"We give the Government of [Prime Minister] Ehud Olmert and his settlers three hours to release a sister kidnapped in Hebron. After that we will fire salvos of rockets against Israel," he warned. An Israeli police spokesman said the woman had been seized by Palestinians, not settlers, as part of a family dispute. (*AFP*, *AP*)

Speaking at an annual memorial ceremony for Israel's founder, David Ben-Gurion, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he extended his hand in peace to "our Palestinian neighbours". Mr. Olmert expressed the hope that the long-stalled peace efforts with the Palestinians would be revived.

He pledged humanitarian and economic incentives if militant factions freed a captive Israeli soldier and violence ceased. "I extend my hand in peace to our Palestinian neighbours in the hope that it won't be returned empty," Mr. Olmert said. He spoke of releasing many long-term Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails, lifting restrictions on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, dismantling settlements and ultimately creating a viable State. However, he also warned of dire consequences if violence continued. (*BBC*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called on Israel to halt its military operations in the West Bank in order to bolster the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. "The occupation should stop its operations and aggressions against our people everywhere because we are one people and one land," he told reporters after talks with PA President Abbas in the Gaza Strip. He also called on Israel to stop "its assassinations" in the West Bank in order to "preserve the climate we have founded these last two days". (*AFP*)

In a response to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's offer for a lasting peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, the spokesman of the PA Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said, "We need actions rather than statements." Mr. Abu Rudeineh also called on Israel to come back to the negotiation table and begin serious talks based on international legitimacy. He emphasized the importance of implementing the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) which called for the return of Palestinian refugees. (*Xinhua*)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General welcomes the reported agreement between President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, to establish a mutual ceasefire in Gaza. He is, however, deeply concerned that Palestinian militants continue to fire rockets against civilian targets inside Israel. Such attacks underscore the destructive power that militants have to derail the crucial efforts underway to de-escalate tensions.

The Secretary-General calls upon both parties to adhere strictly to their commitment, and avoid hasty action which could jeopardize progress towards a sustained period of calm. He also encourages them to endeavour to extend the ceasefire to the West Bank.

(*UN News Centre*, *UN press release SG/SM/10758*)

The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling on Israel to reverse the settlement policy in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, to stop immediately the expansion of the existing settlements, to prevent any new settlements and to confiscate the arms of settlers. A total of 45 countries, including EU members, Latin American States and Japan, voted in favour of the resolution submitted by a group of Islamic countries. Canada opposed the motion, while Cameroon abstained. (*AFP*, *Reuters*)

The Human Rights Council passed a resolution criticizing Israel for its occupation of the Golan Heights. The Council voted 32 in favour, 1 against and 14 abstentions to declare illegal Israel's 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights and demand that Israel rescind its decision to impose its laws and jurisdiction on the area. (*Ha'aretz*)

"This is a particularly important time to discuss the situation in the Middle East. The recent ceasefire has raised hopes for a return to the peace process," Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, whose country holds the EU presidency, said following talks with his Israeli counterpart, Tzipi Livni, on the sidelines of the meeting of Foreign Ministers from EU and the Mediterranean region known as Euromed. (*AFP*)

The first privately-owned English-language daily in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, The Palestine Times, was launched. The 12-page newspaper is not affiliated with any Palestinian parties, said its editor-in-chief, Othman Haj Mohammed. With an initial circulation of 5,000 and a news-stand price of just over \$1, the newspaper will be distributed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Sales in Israel and an Internet edition are also planned. Mr. Mohammed told reporters that it would be the first Palestinian newspaper to be sold on Israeli news-stands. "We have acquired a licence ... and will begin distribution in Israel at the end of this week." Three Arabic-language dailies are published in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, all with ties to the PA. Two English-language weeklies folded after several years. (*AP*, *Reuters*, www.ptimes.org)

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The Gaza Strip remained calm as the ceasefire between the Palestinians and Israel entered its third day. Palestinian security sources said the Rafah Terminal in the southern Gaza Strip would be open for two days to allow the passage of thousands of people stuck on both sides of the terminal. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz said Israel would continue its arrest raids in the West Bank. "The basic understandings are that we are talking about a ceasefire in Gaza alone," he told reporters while inspecting construction of the wall around Jerusalem. (*DPA*)

At a news conference in Nablus, a group of 20 masked militants of the Jund Allah (God's Soldiers) cell brandished four homemade rockets which they threatened to fire against Israel. One of the projectiles, 1.5 metres in length, had a range of 5 km and a 3-kg payload, the group claimed. "We have a certain number of these rockets and we are going to use them when the time is right." The group, linked to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, nevertheless said it intended to observe a ceasefire agreement reached with Israel. (*AFP*)

According to *Ha'aretz*, the IDF altered its rules of engagement along the Israel-Gaza border, allowing troops to fire should they positively identify militants preparing to launch a rocket, despite the ceasefire. "The terror organizations need to understand that we're not in a time-out," Defence Minister Peretz said. "We are still prepared for various reaction situations on their part." Mr. Peretz also said he had instructed IDF to establish liaison teams to assist PA President Abbas in deploying forces at Qassam-launching sites in an effort to prevent rocket fire. (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*) Israel reportedly agreed in principle to let Jordanian-based PLO forces enter the Gaza Strip to help maintain the truce there. The Badr forces, which number about 1,500 troops, would be deployed along the Israel-Gaza border to reinforce Palestinian security personnel trying to prevent militants from firing rockets into Israel. Saeb Erakat, a senior aide to PA President Abbas, said the President had requested Israeli permission to bring 1,200 Badr troops into Gaza several months ago, but "so far, it's not a done deal." "So far the number has not been finalized and it is the subject of contacts between people in the [Israeli] Prime Minister's Office and [PA President] Mahmoud Abbas' people," an Israeli source told *AFP*.

(*AFP, AP*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh began a visit to Islamic countries, leaving Gaza for the first time since Hamas had taken office in March 2006. He planned to be away for several weeks and visit Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Syria. The trip had been delayed, his office had said the day before, after Israel said security conditions had not permitted European monitors to cross from Israel into Gaza, the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah Crossing Point in the Palestinian Territories and PA officials said. (*AP, Reuters*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II and PA President Abbas discussed ways of reviving Palestinian-Israeli talks on the eve of a visit by US President Bush. The King said at the meeting that the need today for real progress in the peace process to end the cycle of violence and bolster the chances of achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians was greater than ever. He also pledged to coordinate with Arab and European nations to provide economic assistance to the Palestinians, saying that Jordan would act on all fronts. Speaking at the opening of the fourth ordinary session of parliament since June 2003 elections, the King stressed that Jordan would not accept an unjust settlement of the issue, nor would Jordan accept any settlement that came at its expense. The King said that his Government committed itself to offering all possible support to the Palestinians, so they could regain their rights and establish their independent State on Palestinian soil. (*AFP, AP, Petra*)

While in Amman, PA President Abbas welcomed what he called "positive" overtures from Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and his willingness to return to the negotiating table. He also congratulated Mr. Olmert on his positive comments on the Arab peace initiative. He also reportedly told Jordan that talks with Hamas on the national unity Government had hit a dead end and that he would pursue other options. (*AFP, Reuters*)

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a senior PLO member and senior aide to PA President Abbas, said Israeli President Olmert's call for the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table was a continuation of the unilateral policy and a bid to impose solutions from one side. Taysser Khaled, a senior member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said Mr. Olmert's speech appeared flexible but reflected obstinacy in its content. He dismissed Mr. Olmert's calls to the Palestinians to abandon their legitimate right of resisting the occupation and the right of return of refugees.

(*Xinhua*)

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres said he was optimistic that peace could be restored in the Middle East following recent developments between Israel and the Palestinians. "I hope that we now have a new opening. I'm very glad to see these developments," Mr. Peres said before a speech at Cornell University in the United States. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Ending two days of talks chaired by Finland, the 8th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs issued a joint statement entitled "Tampere conclusions", which stated that a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict should include a safe and secure Israel and a viable, sovereign and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as foreseen in the Road Map. The final status, including border issues, would have to be agreed by the parties. More detailed language was impossible, officials said, because the Israeli and Arab delegations disagreed on the phrasing of security and terrorism issues. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Turkey and Tunisia participated in the meeting, which took place in Tampere, Finland's second largest city. (*AP, DPA, www.eu2006.fi*)

"China welcomes the announcement by Israel and Palestine of a mutual ceasefire in the Gaza Strip," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said in Beijing. "The announcement marks a positive step in easing the tension of this region," Ms. Jiang said. "We hope the two sides can seize the opportunity and resume peace talks at an early date." (*Xinhua*)

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Israeli forces arrested seven Palestinians in the West Bank: one in Qalqilya, four north-west of Ramallah, one east of Bethlehem and one in Beit Jala. (*Wafa*)

Israel closed the Rafah Terminal after PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar brought in millions of dollars through the entry point in his suitcase, Palestinian officials said. (*DPA*)

Israel warned that it was losing patience with the Palestinian rocket attacks that had violated a four-day-old ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Chairman of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee Tzahi Hanegbi, speaking on public radio, said that the policy of restraint would last only a few days. The Prime Minister had ordered the army not to respond, although since the start of the ceasefire, twelve rockets had been fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israeli Territory. (*AFP*)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh began talks with Egyptian officials in Cairo on prisoner exchange with Israel and the formation of a national unity Government, as he began a round of talks with Arab leaders. "We have made reasonable progress concerning Palestinian dialogue; we have agreed on a framework and continued dialogue and we hope that this government will see the light as soon as our internal dialogue is over. The dialogue on the Government is facing difficulties but we are determined to make these efforts for a national unity cabinet succeed", he told reporters after the meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. At a joint press conference with Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, Mr. Haniyeh called on the international community to pressure Israel to force it to accept an independent Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders and said, "What is essential is that [the issue] not remain unaddressed indefinitely and that a specific deadline is set." Commenting on the peace process, he said, "The Palestinian people are now bored with the Middle East peace process." (*AFP, AP, DPA, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

Israel had freed PA Minister of Public Works Abdul Tahman Zeidan after failing to find evidence that he had been involved in violence himself, his relatives said. He was arrested on 3 November joining dozens of Hamas political leaders rounded up by the Israelis after militants linked to the group captured an Israeli soldier on 25 June. (*AP, Reuters*)

Palestinian Legislative Council member Mustafa Barghouti met with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Meshaal in Damascus. Mr. Barghouti stated that the meeting had been positive and constructive, and that the mechanism and details for composing a national unity Government had been discussed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977. At Headquarters, a special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was held in observance of the Day. Statements at the meeting were made, inter alia, by Paul Badji, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations and Chairman of the Committee, Sheikh Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the General Assembly, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Jorge Voto-Bernales, Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations and President of the Security Council. (*UN press release GA/PAL/1022*)

The international community, including the Quartet, should respond positively to the national unity government once it is formed, said EU Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. "We fully support President Abbas' efforts to form a new Government which reflects the Quartet's principles and allows the international community to fully re-engage ... When we have such a Government, it is vital that all of us in the international community, including Israel, respond immediately and concretely." (DPA)

UNHCHR Louise Arbour said in a statement to the Human Rights Council that transparent and credible investigations by Israel in the killings of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun were key to breaking a climate of impunity in the region. Ms. Arbour said that Israel had both the right and the duty to defend its population against rocket attacks but it must do so within the bounds of human rights and humanitarian law. "This would be central to break a culture of impunity and contribute to solidify the rule of law", she said. (AFP, AP, www.unog.org)

South Africa Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of Cape Town, would head the UN fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun. Archbishop Tutu would travel to Gaza to assess the situation of the victims, address the needs of survivors and make recommendations on ways to protect Palestinian civilians against further Israeli assaults, according to Human Rights Council President Luis Alfonso de Alba. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

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Israeli forces arrested 16 Palestinians in Bethlehem and five in Nablus. (Wafa)

A 16-year-old Palestinian, Shadi Naief, was killed and three others were wounded by Israeli gunfire in Beita, south of Nablus, according to Palestinian security sources. An Israeli army spokesman said, "A patrol operating in Beita opened fire towards a Palestinian who had thrown a petrol bomb and an explosive charge towards it." (AFP, Reuters)

Israeli Minister of National Infrastructures Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said Egypt's Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman had told Israeli officials during his visit the previous day that he believed the Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian militants could be released within three weeks. (AP)

An Israeli political source said Israel was considering the release of Palestinians jailed in connection with deadly militant attacks as part of efforts to recover the soldier held captive in Gaza. (Reuters)

At a news conference with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Jericho, PA President Abbas declared that he had hit a dead end in talks with Hamas on forming a new Government. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said, "In my opinion, if the President says this it means he personally will not pursue this any longer. ... He will summon the PLO Executive Committee, or leadership, and study the options, anything short of a civil war."

Senior aide Yasser Abed Rabbo said Mr. Abbas would soon announce "unprecedented political steps" in the wake of the breakdown in talks with Hamas. For her part, Secretary Rice called on Israelis and Palestinians to step up efforts to achieve a long-stalled peace deal. "Hopefully we can take this moment to accelerate our efforts and intensify our efforts toward the two-State solution that we all desire," she told the news conference. She also reiterated support for a viable and contiguous Palestinian State, and that no actions that were being taken currently should prejudice the outcome of a final status agreement. (AP)

Secretary of State Rice met with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in Jerusalem. The Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that US Secretary of State Rice had expressed appreciation for Prime Minister Olmert's speech earlier in the week and said that it was an important step that was likely to contribute towards calm and advance the peace process in the region. (Ha'aretz, www.pmo.gov.il)

The Anti-Defamation League criticized the appointment of Archbishop Desmond Tutu as head of the Beit Hanoun fact-finding mission created by the Human Rights Council, describing it as an extension of the anti-Israel kangaroo court tactics. (Ha'aretz, www.adl.org)

Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the Humanitarian Appeal 2007, asking for \$3.9 billion to provide food, water, medicine and other emergency assistance to help 27 million people struggling to survive in areas of conflict and natural disasters in 29 countries or regions in 2007. The consolidated appeal concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory was set at \$454 million. (UN News Centre, <http://ochaonline.un.org>)

A report entitled "The Agreement on Movement and Access: one year on", issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated, "The ability of Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip to access either the West Bank or the outside world remains extremely limited and the flow of commercial trade is negligible. Movement within the West Bank is more restricted. There has been no peaceful economic development as envisaged by the Agreement on Movement and Access but rather a deterioration in the humanitarian situation and an increase in violence overall." (www.ochaopt.org)
