

Division for Palestinian Rights
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine**

MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW

July 2005

Monthly highlights

- G-8 agrees to a \$3 billion aid package for the Palestinian Authority. ([8 July](#))
- Security Council convenes to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, upon request by the Arab Group. ([21 July](#))

1

Palestinians open fire on an IDF position near Rafah and fired a mortar shell at an IDF post in the northern Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

An IDF soldier and six activists were wounded during a protest against the West Bank separation wall in the village of Bil'in, near Ramallah, *Israel Radio* reported. Four Israeli activists were arrested. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF confirmed earlier reports that Palestinian militants had kidnapped two Israeli soldiers near Nablus were "incorrect". A PA Interior Ministry spokesman described the reports as "untrue rumours". He indicated that an Israeli soldier had gone missing in Bethlehem and that the PA police had found him and handed him over to the Israeli side. (*DPA, Xinhua*)

A Hamas spokesman said the movement was ready to work with the Palestinian Authority over Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip starting next month. (*AFP*)

The latest Israeli opinion poll in *Yediot Ahronot* said support for the disengagement plan had risen from 53 to 62 per cent, while opposition had fallen from 38 to 31 per cent, following violent protests by settlers and supporters. (*Reuters*)

An Israeli settler allegedly ran over an elderly Palestinian woman with his car near Bethlehem. Palestinian security sources and witnesses said Mariam Khalil Salah, 75, was riding her mule to land she owns near the "Efrat" settlement when a settler swerved toward the animal. Ms. Salah fell off the mule and hit her head on the pavement which caused an internal haemorrhage. Israeli troops reportedly took the woman to a hospital and later arrested the suspect. (*UPI*)

"The closure of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip was lifted this morning, but it is forbidden to bring in material that might be used to thwart or prevent the application of the disengagement plan," an IDF spokesman said. The closure had been imposed at midnight the day before. (*AFP*)

PA Minister for Civilian Affairs Mohammed Dahlan said that new homes built in areas Israel intended to evacuate in the Gaza Strip would be used to house some 250,000 Palestinians. He also said Israel would be obligated to remove the rubble, as the decision to carry out the demolitions was Israel's. (*Ha'aretz*)

The 32nd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Sana'a, Yemen, adopted a communiqué which affirmed that Jerusalem was the central issue of the Islamic world. "All Israeli acts and measures in East Jerusalem are illegal and Jerusalem city is part and parcel of the occupied Arab and Palestinian land", the communiqué said. (*Wafa*)

2

A Palestinian was wounded by an Israeli tank shell in the southern Gaza Strip overnight as he attempted to infiltrate the "Morag" settlement, medics said. The perpetrator, from the Fatah-affiliated Abu Rish Brigades, was brought to a hospital with serious injuries to his leg. IDF sources said troops fired one shell after they saw the man digging near the settlement's fence. (*AFP, Reuters*)

Israeli police said that three suspects in an attack on 18-year-old Hilal Ziad al-Majaida had managed to evade authorities despite attempts to apprehend them. Southern District Police Commander Yoram Levy told *Israel Army Radio* that they were "actively seeking" the three, whose identities were known, adding that two of the suspects were aged 18 and the other 16. Two days later Mr. Levy announced that one 18-year-old had been arrested. (*AFP*)

Up to 20 Palestinian gunmen from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades briefly occupied the Palestinian Legislative Council building in Rafah demanding jobs with the PA. No administrative employees or lawmakers were present in the building, and the gunmen, some masked, left after about half an hour. No shots were fired. (*AFP, AP*)

The Fatah Central Committee (FCC) ended its three-day meeting in Amman. PA President Abbas, prior to his departure on a tour to North Africa that included Mauritania and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, described the Amman meeting as very successful because "an agreement was reached on

all issues of difference". He reiterated that Palestinians were "completely prepared" to take over control of the Gaza Strip following Israel's pullout, adding a Palestinian takeover would be "quiet, clean and respectful". He told reporters that FCC had discussed appointing a vice president but no names were mentioned. He denied that negotiations with the Israelis had collapsed, saying they were maintained at all levels. On his part, PA Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Sha'ath told a news conference after the meeting that FCC agreed on "real reforms" and stressed that the Government was keen to "uproot corruption" and resort to a law which would scrutinize officials' private finances. Elections will be held in the movement to allow the younger generation to take part in the decision-making. Mr. Sha'ath also said there was consensus on "regulating armament", referring to armed Palestinian gangs "who use weapons, not to defend the country, but for blackmailing and killing". He confirmed that FCC had proposed forming a national unity government, saying the leaders had established a committee for dialogue with different factions, saying "we welcomed the participation of the Palestinian factions in a coalition government to unify the efforts after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. (DPA, Xinhua)

PA President Abbas had asked Hamas to join his Cabinet. PA negotiator Saeb Erakat, who said that this was not the first time Mr. Abbas had offered to bring the group into his Cabinet, added, "our policy is a policy of one authority, one gun, and we welcome all political parties to participate as such". Hamas' West Bank leader, Hassan Yousef, said the group was considering the latest offer from Mr. Abbas. Hamas said that in principle, it did not reject the offer and was still studying it. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that a final answer to Mr. Abbas' offer would be announced at an appropriate time. PA President Abbas had asked Hamas to join his Cabinet. PA negotiator Saeb Erakat, who said that this was not the first time Mr. Abbas offered to bring the group into his Cabinet, added, "Our policy is a policy of one authority, one gun and we welcome all political parties to participate as such". Hamas' West Bank leader, Hassan Yousef, said the group was considering the latest offer from Mr. Abbas. Hamas said that in principle, it did not reject the offer and was still studying it. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that a final answer to Mr. Abbas' offer would be announced at an appropriate time. (AP, Xinhua)

Islamic Jihad spokesman in Gaza, Khader Habib, in response to media reports that the Fatah Central Committee, in a meeting in Jordan, had proposed forming a national unity government, told reporters, "Our position is very clear that we decided not to join any national unity government or to participate in any legislative election that has the Oslo accords as its ceiling", adding, "the Oslo accords were unfair and unjust for our people". He said that his movement would only accept joining a committee that would include all Palestinian national and Islamic powers to observe the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. "We of course have plans and we are ready to coordinate those plans in order to reach understandings on all issues and organize our internal house after the Israeli withdrawal," Mr. Habib said. (Xinhua)

"If the Israeli army completely withdraws from the Gaza Strip, I will get back there for good, but I would never accept any Israeli army or Jewish settlers' presence", Farouk Kaddoumi was quoted as saying by Palestinian press. (Xinhua)

3

An Israeli border policeman died from injuries sustained from falling off a balcony while chasing Palestinian rock-throwers during a protest against Israel's separation barrier outside Jerusalem, Israeli police said. (AP)

President Bush had added the "Palestinian conflict" to the list of issues to be taken up at the upcoming G-8 summit. "We will also talk about the Palestinian conflict. It is possible that the G-8 countries, the industrialized countries, can help the Palestinians," he told *Jyllands-Posten* in an [interview](#) posted on the newspaper's website. (AFP)

The Israeli Cabinet voted 18-3 against a proposal to delay for three months the start of the evacuation of Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank. The proposal was made by Agriculture Minister Yisrael Katz and supported by Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (AP, Reuters)

PA Civil Affairs Minister Mohammed Dahlan said that Palestinian control of crossings would ensure the success of an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. "Israel does not want to let the Palestinian National Authority have its full control of all passages and terminals," he said, adding that such an Israeli move would affect peace prospects. (Xinhua)

Residents of three East Jerusalem neighbourhoods – Anata, Ras al-Hamis and the Shuafat refugee camp, with a population of some 25,000 people – appealed to the High Court of Justice against Israel's West Bank barrier, saying it would sever them from the city. The petitioners have agreed to an alternative route that would separate them from the adjacent neighbourhoods under PA control. (Ha'aretz, UPI)

Peace Now filed a petition in Israel's High Court of Justice against the "Amona" settlement outpost, north of Jerusalem, near Ramallah and the "Ofra" settlement, hoping to establish a precedent. "Amona" was founded in 1995 and is currently home to 25 families and 53 mobile homes. Peace Now wants the Court to stop the construction of nine houses in the outpost; families from moving in and the enforcement of an existing demolition order issued by the Civil Administration. Peace Now said the houses had been built on private Palestinian land. Civil Administration spokesman Lt. Adam Avidan said the demolition order for "Amona" was issued in October 2004, and that the IDF and Government were now responsible for its implementation. (AP)

A report issued by the PA State Information Service placed the number of Palestinians killed by the IDF during the intifada at 4,050, with 44,848 others injured. Among the dead, 1,922 people were from the West Bank and 2,128 from the Gaza Strip, and included 751 children, 236 women, 344 members of security services, 836 students and teachers and 325 militants. The report said that 50 people had been killed in settlers' attacks. A total of 8,200 Palestinians were detained in Israeli jails, 614 of whom had been arrested by the IDF before the intifada. The report further said that some 272,000 Palestinians were jobless in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, with 76.6 per cent of Palestinians living under the poverty line in 2003. (Xinhua)

Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said its militants had traded fire with Israeli troops who tried to raid the Tal al-Sultan neighbourhood west of Rafah. IDF sources said that Palestinian militants fired several mortar shells at settlements in the southern Gaza Strip. They also reported that a Palestinian militant had been wounded at predawn near the "Atzmona" settlement, adding that Palestinian militants had opened fire six times at the settlement but caused no injuries. (Xinhua)

The IDF reopened Jericho after sealing it off for several hours. "The Palestinians and Israelis have decided to end the closure and reopen Jericho", Kamal Qadumi, commander of the Palestinian national security forces in the town, said after a joint security meeting at which the decision was taken. Mr. Qadumi said there was no evidence that shots had been fired at Israeli soldiers manning a checkpoint near the town. (AFP)

An Israeli military tribunal imposed 12 life sentences on a jailed Hamas militant. Ibrahim Abdelrahman Mohammed Guenedieh was found guilty of organizing a suicide bombing on an Israeli bus in West Jerusalem on 21 November 2002, which killed 11 and wounded 48 others. His life sentences represent one each for every one of those killed and an additional one for the wounded. He was given 30 days to appeal. (AFP)

The IDF fired on the Khan Yunis refugee camp after Palestinian militants launched several rockets at a nearby Israeli settlement. Also, an IDF force backed by several tanks and APCs from the "Netzarim" settlement, south of Gaza City, raided the southern Mughraga neighbourhood early in the day. (Xinhua)

4

The PA Interior Ministry said there was no agreement with Israel on a handover of control of Qalqilya and Bethlehem. The Ministry's spokesman, Tawfeeq Abu Khousa, told reporters that a meeting held earlier Monday in Bethlehem between senior Israeli and Palestinian security and army officials "failed due to the Israeli policy of postponement". Col. Awnit Matar, senior PA security officer in Bethlehem, and Israeli commander Gen.

Nissan Alon led the talks at Israel's military HQ in the "Gush Etzion" settlement block, west of Bethlehem. A senior Israeli official, quoted by public radio said that Israel would not relinquish control over certain areas, notably to the east of the town and around the so-called Tunnels Road north-east of Bethlehem. (AFP, DPA)

A special 5,000-member Palestinian security force, assigned to Israel's withdrawal operation, had begun training. Ibrahim Salama, an aide to PA Interior and National Security Minister Nasser Yousef, told UPI that the force would be made up of members of Force 17 that had been Yasser Arafat's presidential guard; the Naval Force; the Coastal Police; and some 2,000 members of the PA security forces in the West Bank who had Gazan identity cards and whom the Israelis had sent to Gaza. The latter have to be recruited again, he said. (AP, UPI)

Palestinian human right groups urged the international community to intervene and force Israel to ease travel restrictions on the Rafah crossing. The groups charged that stringent security measures imposed by Israel on the crossing between Egypt and Gaza cause suffering for hundreds of Palestinian travellers, stuck for days on the Egyptian side because Israeli border guards only allowed two or three buses to cross into Gaza every day. (UPI)

Adam Avidan, a spokesman for Israel's Civil Administration, said that the IDF was seizing 207 dunums (52 acres, 20.7 hectares) of land in the northern West Bank to set up housing for soldiers who were to dismantle four settlements in the area. Part of the land was privately owned by Palestinian farmers, Mr. Avidan said, but could not immediately say how great a part. The IDF spokesman's office said the seizures, which it described as a "rental", were temporary and that the IDF would not hold on to the land longer than necessary. Mr. Avidan estimated that the military would use the land from four to six weeks to set up tents, a parking site and medical facilities and to store equipment. Palestinian farmers affected by the orders said they would go to court, if necessary, to fight the takeover of their land. (AP)

An Islamic Jihad leader in the West Bank, Khader Adnan, told Voice of Palestine that Israel had arrested more than 300 of its activists in the West Bank over the past three weeks. (Xinhua)

PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs Sufian Abu Zayda said that Palestinian female prisoners in Israeli jails were living in difficult situation. Mr. Abu Zayda made the statement after having visited more than 150 Palestinian female prisoners held in Israel's "Hasharon" prison the previous day. (Xinhua)

PFLP and DFLP expressed their readiness to join a national unity government called for by the PA leadership. Rabah Mhanna, a senior PFLP leader, told reporters that his faction had received an official invitation from the PA to join such a government and would support any form of a national unity cabinet to follow up on the Israeli withdrawal. He added that the PFLP leadership had not engaged in the details of such participation. Saleh Zeidan, a senior DFLP leader in the Gaza, also announced that his group's leadership had received the offer and was positively considering the matter. (Xinhua)

An UNRWA [statement](#) said that the Agency had delivered 109 housing units to 116 families from Rafah refugee camp whose shelters had been destroyed by the IDF during the last four years. (Xinhua, UNRWA press release FO/G/05/2005)

5

IDF bulldozers razed 17 sheds and makeshift homes in a Palestinian hamlet in Khirbet, east of Nablus, in the northern West Bank. Farmers and shepherds who lived there said they had recently received notice that the buildings, which were situated close to the "Mekhora" settlement, were to be destroyed as they had been constructed "within a military zone". (AFP)

Palestinian witnesses said they saw IDF bulldozers and armoured vehicles removing a 5-km barbed-wire fence that surrounded the "Dugit", "Nissanit" and "Elei Sinai" settlements in the northern Gaza Strip. The fence was reportedly not completely removed, with the electronic part of the fence kept in place, apparently until the withdrawal started. (Xinhua)

Gaza could fall under control of Hamas after Israel's withdrawal unless the Israeli and Palestinian Governments begin serious coordination, two former US Middle East envoys warned. Dennis Ross, the former chief Middle East negotiator, and Martin Indyk, US ambassador to Israel under the Clinton Administration, told a conference in Jerusalem that the problems were urgent and that no solution was in sight. They said that the PA was dysfunctional, the international community promised much but delivered little, and Israel was reluctant to allow the Palestinians to properly arm their security forces, a step necessary to enable them to take control of the Gaza Strip. Mr. Indyk also charged that the US was not doing enough politically to support the withdrawal. (AFP, AP)

The PA Cabinet concluded, after an investigation of several weeks, that Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I was not involved in the long-term lease of church real estate properties to Jewish settlement groups in Jerusalem's Old City. In a report published in The PA Cabinet had concluded, after an investigation of several weeks, that Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I was not involved in the long-term lease of church real estate properties to Jewish settlement groups in Jerusalem's Old City. In a report published in *Al-Quds*, a PA ministerial commission wrote that it had found no evidence that Irineos was aware of the property deals. "He did not take part in the transactions at any stage and did not receive any money," the commission said, stressing also that the transactions were illegal because they had not been signed by the Synod. The commission had alleged that Irineos was the victim of a conspiracy by leading clerics and Israeli extremists who allegedly were trying – each for their own motives – to oust him. The patriarchate said in its statement that to the best of its knowledge, the report in *Al-Quds* was not the official PA report, but had been drafted by two lawyers acting on Irineos' behalf. (AP, Reuters)

More than 40,000 soldiers and some 4,000 police are to be deployed in the Gaza Strip to carry out Israel's evacuation. Troops are to be positioned in six circles, with police dominating the inner one, and a mix of soldiers and police in the outermost circle, Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz told a Knesset committee session. Security officials originally said that about 30,000 soldiers would take part in the operation, but the number of soldiers was reportedly increased because the duration of the pullout had been shortened to 4 weeks from 12, and the police needed greater reinforcement. A total of 17 reserve battalions would replace conscripts and paramilitary police who would be deployed to Gaza for the withdrawal, Mr. Mofaz said. Ad hoc divisions have been created from various armed forces to provide more manpower for the withdrawal. Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi told the committee that the police planned to allot some 4,000 officers to participate directly in the pullout. Police spokesman Avi Zelba said that an undetermined number of additional forces would be assigned to handle civil disobedience by pullout opponents. (AP)

Defence Minister Mofaz told a Knesset committee meeting broadcast live on television that Israel was close to an agreement with Egypt on its border with the Gaza Strip that could pave the way for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the territory. "We are in the process of concluding the protocol concerning the deployment of 750 Egyptian border police who would replace the civilian police who are there", Mr. Mofaz said, adding that the agreement would be a document separate from Israel's 1979 peace treaty with Egypt. "I believe that ultimately it is in the interests of the Palestinians and the interests of the Egyptians to stop the smuggling of weapons. It would enable us to leave the Philadelphi corridor because it is also in our interest to leave the Philadelphi corridor", he said. (Reuters)

Hamas warned the PA that it would resist any attempts to disarm its militants. "Who would defend the sons of Hamas?" Mahmud Zahar, Hamas leader in Gaza, said in an interview with the Palestinian news agency *Ramattan*. "The answer is clear, and we will not allow anyone to disarm us". "Hamas will not remain with its arms folded in Gaza if the West Bank is attacked," he also said, adding, "Our national cause is not connected to the West Bank, Gaza or even Jerusalem. Our cause in Hamas is Palestine, the whole of Palestine". (AFP)

Hamas has rejected the call to join a government of national unity. Its spokesman, Sami Abu Zahri, said, "We announce our refusal to take part in the

proposed government and stress that Palestinian interests necessitate efforts for a national authority, notably through the reactivation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. We also underline the need to form a national committee to deal specifically with the upcoming Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and north of the West Bank". PA negotiator Saeb Erakat told *AP* that this decision by Hamas would not affect the takeover of the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal, saying, "We hope to exert every possible effort to ensure a smooth evacuation of Gaza with the cooperation of all groups, including the Palestinian government". (*AP, UPI*)

Environment Minister Shalom Simchon said that Israel would conduct an environmental survey of its Gaza Strip settlements ahead of the planned pullout next month to counter Palestinian claims that it had deliberately polluted the area, with the results to be presented to relevant international officials. Mr. Simchon said that there were some hazardous materials consisting of industrial and agricultural chemicals stored at the "Erez industrial zone" on the northern border of Gaza, but that the Defence Ministry had promised to remove them before the pullout. He denied there were any radioactive materials in the area. Mr. Simchon also called on the Israeli Government to reverse its decision to destroy the buildings in the 21 Gaza settlements set to be evacuated, saying that the 1.5 million tons of rubble it would create would pose an environmental problem if it were not properly sorted. "There is no choice but to leave the houses and let the Palestinians remove them and use the materials ... for their own purposes, even if we have to fund it," he said. (*AP*)

The PA confirmed a plan to link the Gaza Strip with the West Bank after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The Palestinian daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* quoted officials in the PA Ministry of Economy as saying that the link would cost \$125 million and that the plan was under preparation by international experts. The Ministry's Assistant Under-Secretary Saeb Bamieh told the daily that the plan might be the construction of a railway that uses an underground tunnel in areas under Israeli sovereignty. Until a railway was built, the World Bank proposed to bring 30 buses temporarily to shuttle Palestinians between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. *Israel Public Radio* cited Western diplomatic sources as saying that in principle Israel and the PA had reached agreement over safe passage in convoys escorted by Israeli security forces. The radio also said that the railway option was likely to cost more than a previous proposal to build a 42-km underground road at the cost of US\$1.3 million [per km]. (*AFP, AFX, Xinhua*)

6

IDF troops arrested two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, one of whom had tried to infiltrate Israel near Rafah. (*Xinhua*)

A statement from the PA Ministry of the Interior said that nine Palestinians had been injured east of the "Kfar Darom" settlement in the central Gaza Strip when an Israeli settler driving a car tried to enter the neighbourhood east of the settlement. When the residents refused to let him pass, he drove his car back and hit three residents. The statement also said that during the clash between the settler and the residents, an IDF force and several settlers arrived at the scene and clashed with them. Nine had been injured, one lost an eye and another was critically injured and transferred to an Israeli hospital by an IDF helicopter. Palestinian security sources said that the same evening, another Israeli settler in a car hit a 57-year-old Palestinian near the "Gadid" settlement west of Khan Yunis. (*Xinhua*)

A second suspect in last week's attempted lynching of a Palestinian teenager in the Al-Mawasi area of the Gaza Strip, a 19-year-old resident of the "Kiryat Arba" settlement near Hebron, was arrested in the evening. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel razed eight Palestinian houses and a gas station in East Jerusalem built without permits in areas Israel had zoned for open green space, Israeli officials said. The city of Jerusalem and the Interior Ministry said they had carried out separate demolitions over the past 48 hours. B'Tselem field workers documented the demolition of five houses and a gas station on 4 July, and three more houses on 5 July, the group's spokeswoman, Sarit Michaeli, said. Several of the homes were under construction, but most were occupied, she said. The houses were built without permits, which Palestinians say were nearly impossible to obtain and therefore many build without them. A spokesman for the city of Jerusalem said the city had razed 37 structures so far this year compared to 124 for all of 2004, but gave no information on plans for further demolitions. (*Reuters*)

IDF soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian militant who was trying to enter the "Morag" settlement in the Gaza Strip; a second Palestinian who took part in the attack was wounded but managed to flee, Islamic Jihad said in a statement. (*AFP*)

PA Prime Minister Qureia told the weekly Cabinet meeting that Hamas had not yet given its final answer to a national unity government, a Cabinet statement said the next day. (*Xinhua*)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef met Defence Minister Mofaz in Tel Aviv to discuss coordinating the Gaza withdrawal, but no agreements were announced other than to meet again next week. The same evening, PA Deputy Interior Minister Gen. Jamal Abu Zayed met in Tel Aviv with Yitzhak Harel, IDF Chief of Planning Department and discussed security coordination between the two sides. (*AP, Xinhua*)

Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian security officials had agreed to end the crisis at the Rafah crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, where at least 2,000 Palestinians had been stranded on the Egyptian side waiting to cross. An Interior Ministry statement sent to reporters said that in a trilateral coordination among the Palestinians, the Israelis and the Egyptians, it had been agreed upon to end the crisis. (*Xinhua*)

Prime Minister Sharon ordered faster work on the erection of Israel's West Bank barrier around Jerusalem. More than two years after construction began, less than one-third of the 680-km-long barrier has been built. The barrier should be ready by the end of the year, Deputy Defence Minister Ze'ev Boim told *Israel Radio*, adding that most of the infrastructure for the barrier in the southern West Bank was already in place and the work in the area was progressing at a fast pace. In those areas where legal disputes over the route of the barrier were holding up progress, a temporary route would be used, Mr. Boim said. The officials said construction had been delayed in four sections of the barrier, including the one surrounding Jerusalem, due to several pending petitions that had been filed with the High Court of Justice. Defence Minister Mofaz had suggested that the route of the barrier near the "Ariel" settlement be changed to remove several Palestinian villages from within its boundaries, in order to hasten legal approval of the route. Giora Eiland, the head of the National Security Council, said, "We hope that if the legal issues of Jerusalem can be resolved, it will just be a matter of months to finish the fence and close off Jerusalem". PA negotiator Saeb Erakat said that Mr. Sharon's order "undermines the efforts to revive the peace process." "We urge the US and President Bush to exert maximum efforts in order to have Mr. Sharon comply with the cessation of violence and the cessation of building the wall", he added. (*AP, DPA*)

Visiting PA President Abbas told reporters in Damascus that he hoped that Hamas would join a government of national unity. "We have offered to Palestinian movements to take part ... we hope [they will]. We still did not hear an official answer from our brethren in Hamas," Mr. Abbas said. He was scheduled to meet Syria's President Assad for talks on the situation in the OPT, bilateral relations and the Middle East peace process. National Palestinian unity would top the agenda, the official *Tishrin* newspaper reported. (*DPA, Xinhua*)

The World Bank regional director, Nigel Roberts, said in an interview with *AP* that the international community would look closely at the Israeli and Palestinian performance – including Israeli willingness to lift closures and Palestinian reform – before spending money in the Gaza Strip. Speaking about options for safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Mr. Roberts said the World Bank and the Palestinians preferred the sunken road to the railroad, which would be cheaper to operate and allow for greater flexibility, since cargo would not have to be loaded onto and off trains. Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Peres told *AP* that Israel was open to either option, but it might be faster to build a rail link because land for such a project could be expropriated more quickly than for a highway. The World Bank agreed to do a feasibility study and report the results in three to four months. Either project could cost up to \$200 million and take two to three years to build. (*AP*)

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted in its annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, to use "economic leverage" to promote peace between Israel and Palestinians and to call for the dismantling of Israel's West Bank barrier. After the vote, Peter Makari, the Church's Executive

Director for the Middle East and Europe, said that the [resolutions](#) were not anti-Israel and that the Church remained committed to religious dialogue and participation among Jews, Christians and Muslims. "These resolutions condemn all acts of violence on both sides and indicate a clear desire by the Synod to end violence and promote peace," Mr. Makari said. (AP, www.ucc.org)

7

A 17-year-old Palestinian was shot dead and another wounded by IDF troops as they stormed the Balata refugee camp near the city of Nablus in the West Bank, Palestinian medics said. According to the IDF, the troops had fired at gunmen who were apparently prepared for an ambush of Jewish worshippers as they left the Joseph's Tomb holy site. (AP, *Xinhua*)

A Qassam rocket hit the Sapir College near the town of Sderot, no casualties were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia criticized Israel's decision to accelerate the construction of the separation wall in and around Jerusalem during his meeting with US Consul-General in Jerusalem David Pears. He called on the US Government to pressure Israel "to stop its expansionist policies and that of isolating the Holy City from its Palestinian environment in order to annex it." (UPI, Wafa)

Israel would seek US aid to finance its pullout from the Gaza Strip, Israel's Finance Ministry said in a statement. Top officials from Prime Minister Sharon's office and the Finance Ministry would make the request this week to officials in the United States. (Reuters)

The PA was studying the "two seas canal" project aimed at connecting the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, the PA Minister of Planning, Ghassan El-Khatib, told the *Voice of Palestine* radio. He said that the World Bank had held a meeting in which representatives of several countries, including the US, France, Japan and Holland, had expressed interest in financing a study of the project. (*Xinhua*)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia was scheduled to appear before a closed session of the PLC to defend his government's record in re-establishing law and order. PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef was also scheduled to brief the deputies on his efforts to reform the security services. (AFP)

During an official lunch in Damascus, which brought PA President Abbas together with exiled Palestinian leaders, Syria's President Assad said, "Palestinian national unity is essential if Palestinians are to restore their land and meet current challenges." He said he would continue to urge all the factions to honour the ceasefire agreement. (AFP)

Reacting to a proposal by Hamas to form a national committee to oversee Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, PA National Security Advisor Jibril Rajoub said: "There will not be a parallel or alternative authority or committee to run Gaza." (*Ha'aretz*)

Romania would open a diplomatic mission in Ramallah and establish a Romanian-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, Romania's Foreign Minister Mihai Razvan Ungureanu announced. (AP)

In response to a question about recent comments by Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Spokesman for the Secretary-General said that the UN believed that any comparison between conditions in the Gaza Strip and those of Nazi concentration camps was irresponsible. Such a comparison did not reflect the views of the Secretary-General. (UN News Centre)

8

A fifteen-year-old Palestinian died after being shot near a separation wall construction site in Beit Lahiya, some 15 km south-west of Ramallah, police and witnesses said. An Israeli security guard admitted shooting the youth and was released, an Israeli police spokesman told AFP, saying that the guard claimed he had acted in self-defence after a group of youths began throwing stones. (AFP)

Around 500 Palestinian, Israeli and foreign activists demonstrated in the northern West Bank village of Bil'en against the separation wall. Soldiers fired tear gas and rubber bullets as the demonstrators threw stones. (AFP)

Three IDF soldiers were wounded when a bomb exploded in front of their jeep as they travelled in the southern Gaza Strip. (AFP)

The IDF arrested 10 Palestinians in Jenin and Hebron, including six suspected members of the Islamic Jihad, IDF sources said. (AFP)

PA Minister of Civilian Affairs Mohammed Dahlan said the Rafah and Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing would remain open during the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip. The withdrawal would be implemented in three phases. From 17 July to 17 August, settlers would have the option to leave the Gaza Strip voluntarily. From 17 August to 17 September, the IDF would remove any remaining settlers, and from 17 September until mid-October, all Israeli troops would withdraw. (DPA)

PA President Abbas indicated, after talks with the President of Lebanon, Emile Lahoud, that he would abide by any decision that Lebanon would take on disarming the Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon. "We are guests in Lebanon, temporary guests, and we are subject to Lebanese laws just like everybody else in Lebanon," Mr. Abbas said. (AP)

Speaking at the close of the G-8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Britain's Prime Minister Blair said, "The G-8 agreed to a substantial package of help for the Palestinian Authority, amounting to up to \$3 billion in the years to come, so that two States, Israel and Palestine, two peoples and two religions can live side by side in peace." (Reuters)

Speaking on the sidelines of the G-8 summit, EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso said that the Palestinians were already facing considerable difficulties in using existing aid. "A clearly improved security situation and economic climate" were needed, he added. (DPA)

"President Abbas strongly condemns these atrocious crimes [the London bombings] that have cost the lives of innocent civilians and extends his condolences and those of the Palestinian people to the families of the victims, the British people and Prime Minister Tony Blair," a statement from his office said. PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia called the bombings a "crime against humanity." (AFP)

"Hamas condemns the London attacks and offers its sincere condolences to the victims' families," Hamas said in a statement. (AFP)

"We have informed Abu Mazen [PA President Abbas] of the position of Islamic Jihad, which is not to participate in a Government of national unity," Ramadan Abu Shallah, head of Islamic Jihad, told reporters. PFLP's representative in Damascus, Maher Taher, said, "PFLP participation in the Government is out of the question for the moment." Deputy Chief of Hamas' political bureau, Moussa Abu Marzouk, told Reuters: "We are with national unity both in terms of our policy and practices, but we are not with the Government of national unity." (*Ha'aretz*, *Xinhua*)

The Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology (SYN) party called on the Greek Government to take an initiative for calling an international conference on the Middle East, taking advantage of the country's presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of July. SYN Political Council member Panos Trigazis, who is responsible for the party's foreign policy and international relations, said that such a conference should focus on a just solution to the Palestinian issue and on Iraq. (*Athens News Agency*)

9

Islamic Jihad militants fired four rockets at the Israeli settlements of "Neve Dekalim" and "Ganei Tal" in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources reported. They announced that the shelling was in revenge for the earlier killing of a Palestinian teenager in Beit Lahiya. A militant died in a rocket-firing accident. (*Xinhua*)

The IDF had detained 16 members of Islamic Jihad in the West Bank cities of Jenin and Hebron in the past two days, an official Islamic Jihad source said. (*Xinhua*)

A Palestinian teenager, who had been injured by Israeli gunfire during a clash in the Nablus region of the northern West Bank, died of his injuries, medics said. (AFP)

The forced evacuation of Gaza Strip settlements would begin on 17 August and settlers who would refuse to leave by then will lose some Government grants, a senior Israeli official. (AP)

James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, began a series of meetings with Palestinian and Israeli officials as part of his effort to put together a three-year plan for Palestinian economic recovery, to be funded by the international community. He said

he would present the plan in September. The aid - up to \$3 billion a year - would start flowing in about six months, after Israel had completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Mr. Wolfensohn told reporters. "We are talking about programmes that will be implemented immediately," he said. "We are talking about support early after the withdrawal." (AP)

10

The Islamic Jihad announced that one of its top militant leaders had escaped an assassination attempt near his home in Gaza City. (Xinhua)

Three members of the Islamic Jihad were arrested near the West Bank city of Hebron. (Xinhua)

Israel's President Moshe Katsav called on the Israeli Government to proceed towards permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians and stop making what he called unilateral gestures. (AFP)

Israel's Cabinet approved the final route of the separation wall in and around East Jerusalem, which would eventually cut off some 55,000 Palestinian residents in four neighborhoods from the city, while including some 30,000 settlers in "Ma'aleh Adumim" on the Jerusalem side. Israel's Cabinet Minister for Jerusalem, Haim Ramon, told *Israel Radio* that the plan "also makes [Jerusalem] more Jewish." (AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

PA President Abbas told the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* that negotiations with Israel on a safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the re-opening of the Gaza airport were going well. "I was informed yesterday by the Palestinian negotiating team that great progress has been achieved on these matters," he added. (AFP)

PA President Abbas said in an interview with *Dubai Television* : "I call upon every Arab Government wishing to give citizenship [to Palestine refugees] to do so. This does not mean resettlement. A Palestinian would return to his homeland whenever he is allowed, whether he carried Arab or non-Arab citizenship." (AFP)

In Cairo, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana said, "We are living in extremely important moments for peace and stability in the region. The European Union is doing its best at this stage to support the peace process and move it forward ... Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip should mark the start, not the end, of having two States living side by side in peace according to the internationally-backed [Road Map](#) ." He made the remarks at a press conference after meeting with Egypt's President Mubarak. (AFP, Xinhua)

11

Islamic Jihad said in a leaflet sent to reporters that it had managed to fire two mortar shells at the Israeli settlement of "Netzarim" in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for firing two "Aqsa 2" rockets at the Israeli settlement of "Tal Katif" in the central Gaza Strip.

Seven Palestinians were wounded in a rocket-related accident. (Xinhua)

An IDF soldier was lightly wounded when a pipe bomb was thrown by a Palestinian militant near Ramallah. (AFP)

In the Gaza Strip, a civilian contractor working on a fence along the border with Egypt was slightly wounded by shrapnel after unknown militants fired an anti-tank missile, the IDF said. (AFP)

Hamas had urged the PA to stop all meetings with the Israelis in protest over the decision regarding the separation wall in and around East Jerusalem. (Xinhua)

PA Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa said that the PA was seeking a meeting of the Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly to find ways of enforcing the ICJ [advisory opinion](#) on the separation wall. He said the PA wanted the EU to bar import of goods from West Bank settlements, refuse visas to Israeli settlers, and to consider barring companies such as Caterpillar from operating in Member States if it kept providing the IDF with equipment for use on the wall. He said diplomatic moves would be underpinned by internal legislative proposals seeking to ensure that Palestinians did not work for or provided services for settlers, and to ensure that settler-produced goods did not reach the Palestinian market. (The Independent)

PA President Abbas said "the [East Jerusalem wall] plan is totally rejected. I don't believe that carrying out such measures by the Israeli Government would bring on peace or security, instead it puts obstacles on the road to peace." PA Prime Minister Qureia called the plan "theft in broad daylight". He said, "This decision makes a farce of any talk about peace and turns the Gaza withdrawal into a useless initiative." Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said the Jerusalem wall was inflicting a catastrophe on the Palestinians and "the whole idea is to get as many Palestinians outside Jerusalem, and get as many Israelis as possible inside. This is determining the fate of Jerusalem before we begin negotiations." "Israel must implement the international resolutions and we ask all States... to put pressure on Israel to implement these resolutions," PA Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa told diplomats in Ramallah. "If Israel does not implement these resolutions, Israel must be considered a state without law," he said, urging Palestinians to demonstrate daily against the wall. The EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana said after meeting with Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, "We think that Israel has a right to defend itself but we think that the fence when it is done outside the territory of Israel is not legally proper and it creates also humanitarian problems." The Arab League said through a spokesman, "This decision goes against the international community's stand and its implementation hampers the achievement of a true peace on the basis of a two-State solution." (AFP, AP, Reuters, Ha'aretz)

Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom criticized reported contacts between European diplomats and militant Palestinian groups during a meeting with EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana in Jerusalem. "Any dialogue, even at the lowest level, with terrorist organizations provides legitimacy and back wind to terrorism," he was quoted as saying. (DPA)

A senior Palestinian official said that rebuilding and renovating the Gaza Airport would cost at least €30 million. (Xinhua)

12

Israeli bulldozers, supported by military vehicles, demolished the house of Riyadh Al-Isawi in Wadi Qasem in Jerusalem, leaving ten family members homeless. They also caused damage to two others houses owned by Hassan and Mohammed Hamdan. Mr. Al-Isawi said the IDF had not allowed him to take any of his furniture. Earlier the IDF stormed the home of the Allam family and arrested their two sons, Mohammed, 18, and Aibak, 17. Israeli soldiers stormed and searched tens of other houses, witnesses said. (Wafa)

A suicide bomber blew himself up near a crowd of teenagers near a shopping mall in the seaside city of Netanya killing him and two others. Police said about 30 people were wounded, two seriously. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack but the police said that they have taken an Islamic Jihad suspect into custody. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat condemned the bombing saying, "We understand that those who carried out this attack want to sabotage the efforts being exerted to have a smooth and peaceful disengagement from Gaza and a revival of the peace process". (AFP, Reuters)

A Palestinian militant was injured when he drove a van into an Israeli settlement in a failed suicide bombing. No other casualties were reported. "A Palestinian driving a van containing three gas canisters broke through the barrier at the entrance to 'Shavei Shomron'" settlement, 5 km northwest of Nablus, police spokesman Shlomi Sagi told AFP. "The van got about 100 m into the settlement before blowing up, he said, adding that the driver had not died but was in critical condition. The van had been stolen, he added. (AFP)

Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Yaacov Edri told *Channel Two TV* that the suicide bombing in Netanya and an explosion in a vehicle that entered the "Shavei Shomron" settlement in the West Bank appeared to be coordinated attacks, saying, "These were two terrorist attacks - in my estimation, coordinated - by the rejectionist front, the groups that are opposed to any accord, to any quiet". (Reuters)

Israel's Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told *Israel Army Radio* that the military would deal harshly with soldiers who refused to dismantle Gaza settlements and that some 30 soldiers have so far disobeyed orders. He also said he would prefer not to demolish the homes in the Gaza settlements. However, under an emerging agreement with the Palestinians, army bulldozers would knock down the houses and Israel would pay for the rubble to be removed by the Palestinians, Mofaz said. It remains unclear where the debris would be taken. Mr. Mofaz said Israel and Egypt were close to an agreement on how to secure the Gaza-Egypt border after the Israeli pullout. Israel would withdraw from a military patrol road between Gaza's southern edge and Egypt, and the Israeli troops there would be replaced by some 750 Egyptian officers, who would try to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

A survey of American attitudes toward Israel and the Middle East released in Jerusalem by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) revealed that Americans continued to stand solidly behind Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and overwhelmingly supported Israel's disengagement from Gaza as "a bold step for peace." A nationwide telephone survey of 2,200 Americans was conducted by the Marttila Communications Group. The findings of the survey included: Americans sympathizing with Israel were 42 per cent and with the Palestinians 14 per cent; 71 per cent believed Israel's withdrawal plan was a "bold step for peace"; 77 per cent believed Israel was more serious about reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians and 68 per cent believed Palestinians were serious. (AP)

Israel Radio said EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana had denied that EU was conducting talks with Hamas. Mr. Solana, who is on a [visit](#) to the Middle East from 10 to 14 July, said the EU policy remained unchanged and that Hamas would remain on its list of terrorist groups until it disarmed and joined the PA as a political movement. Mr. Solana visited Cairo on 10 July, Israel on 11 and 12 July and would be visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 13 and 14 July. Mr. Solana told *Al-Ahram* he had discussed with President Mubarak the deployment of Egyptian forces along the Gaza-Egypt borders and had emphasized the need to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement. (*Al-Ahram*)

At a press meeting after receiving the Chinese representative Gong Xiaoshen in Ramallah, PA President Mahmoud Abbas told reporters that Israel's decision on accelerating work on the separation barrier sent a signal that Israel does not want real peace based on the [Road Map](#) and international legitimacy. He said the decision was a strict challenge to international legitimacy and the UN resolutions. He considered the continued Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people an attempt to devastate the PA's efforts to realize a state of calm. (Wafa)

The death toll in the Netanya suicide bombing had increased to four. Two 16-year-old girls and a 31-year-old woman died on the spot, and a 50-year-old woman died in the hospital the next day. Palestinian security officials said the Islamic Jihad cell that recruited the bomber had also been responsible for the 25 February suicide bombing that killed five Israelis outside a Tel Aviv nightclub. PA President Abbas strongly denounced the bombing, calling the perpetrators "traitors". "There is no rational man who can do these things on the eve of the Israeli withdrawal from 22 settlements," he said. "I am very pleased to see the President and Prime Minister have condemned this terrorist act, but I think that the condemnation will not be enough, there has to be an action and I think somebody has to be arrested," EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Qureia in Ramallah. (AP)

The PA Interior Ministry vowed to take all necessary measures against those behind the suicide bombing attack in Netanya. "The Ministry of the Interior strongly condemned the attacks that target Israeli and Palestinian civilians," the Ministry said in a statement, adding that the Palestinian security forces had immediately started an investigation into the attack. (*Xinhua*)

Adnan Khader, Islamic Jihad's spokesman in Ramallah, denied reports that the group received its orders from abroad. "These are just excuses to target Iran, Syria, and Islamic Jihad," he said. "All our decisions are made in Palestine." Earlier in the day, the Islamic Jihad armed wing Saraya Al-Quds claimed responsibility for the Netanya suicide bombing and identified the bomber as Ahmed Sami Abu Khalil, 18. (AP, *Xinhua*)

The United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace [convened](#) its first day in Paris with a statement made by the representative of the Secretary-General, Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Conference was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on 12 and 13 July 2005 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (UN News Service)

In a [press statement](#) on the Middle East read out by its President, Greek Foreign Minister Petros G. Molyviatis, the UN Security Council condemned the terrorist attack in Netanya. (UN Press Release SC/8445)

The following [statement](#) was issued by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Secretary-General strongly condemns the suicide attack in Israel today that took at least two lives, and wounded many others. He is unwavering in his conviction that nothing can justify terror.

Now and in the days ahead, it is critical that all measures be taken to ensure that such attacks do not reoccur, and that the admirable restraint recently observed be maintained so that the violence does not escalate.

(UN Press Release SG/SM/10001)

13

Israeli troops reoccupied Tulkarm, killing a Palestinian policeman and seriously injuring another in a firefight and arresting five Islamic Jihad activists after the group took responsibility for a suicide bombing the day before. Two Israeli troops were wounded in the raid. The bomber, 18-year-old Ahmed Sami Abu Khalil, was from the village of Atil near Tulkarm. While the city was transferred to the PA control four months ago, Atil remained under full Israeli control. The troops declared a curfew in Tulkarm and went house-to-house looking for the bombing's masterminds. They blew up a storage shed that they said housed an explosives laboratory. The IDF also sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip, barring all Palestinians from entering Israel. (AP, Reuters, *Xinhua*)

Two engineers working on a water development project, one British and one Austrian, were kidnapped by masked gunmen in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. Palestinian police were negotiating with the kidnappers, who were apparently a local gang using the hostages as bargaining chips to try to get some of its members released from prison. DPA sources in the camp said the captors were of a large Gaza clan named Issa, which wanted to force the PA to release family members, apparently jailed after they stormed the prison and killed three prisoners held for the killing of a child belonging to the clan in a tribal dispute. (AP, DPA)

The Israeli Government opposed a Jordanian proposal to station the PLO force, the Bader Brigade, inside Palestine to help maintain a truce with Israel. Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Muasher said at a weekly media briefing. Deployment of the 1,500-strong force that has been stationed in Jordan for the last two decades was proposed two months ago by the Jordanian Government. "The Palestinian Authority has welcomed the proposal, but Israel continues to reject it. We will go ahead with our efforts to win an Israeli acceptance of the idea," Mr. Muasher added. (DPA)

Patriarch Irineos, backed by a group of guards, took control of his office in the Jerusalem church compound, police said. (AP)
White House spokesman Scott McClellan and US State Department spokesman Tom Casey condemned the suicide bombing at a shopping mall in Netanya, but urged Prime Minister Sharon to "move ahead" towards establishing a Palestinian State despite the violence. The immediate focus should be withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank, as Mr. Sharon had pledged to do later this summer, Mr. Casey said, adding, "obviously, that progress would have to continue, and ultimately we want to see the President's vision of two States living side by side in peace achieved." Both spokesmen said the bombing was the work of terrorists trying to derail Middle East peace efforts. (AP)

14

Shimshon Citrin, an Israeli settler who nearly stoned to death a Palestinian youth in Gaza and was caught on camera on 29 June, was charged with attempted murder in a Beersheba Israeli court, Israeli media reported. The Palestinian had been caught in a clash with settlers in al-Mawasi, a Palestinian enclave in "Gush Katif". (DPA)

Hamas claimed responsibility for rocket attacks on the settlements of "Nahal Oz," "Aleï Sinai," "Netzarim" and "Nissanit" in the Gaza Strip. (BBC)
A rocket fired from the northern Gaza Strip into Israel hit the kibbutz of Nativ Ha'asara, killing a 22-year-old woman and wounding a man. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was in retaliation for the killing of one of its members in Nablus. (AP, AFP, Reuters)
The IDF arrested 10 suspected members of Islamic Jihad overnight across the West Bank. Four of the suspects were detained in Abu Dis, three in and around Hebron, two in the Nablus area and the tenth, south of Jenin, the spokeswoman said. (AFP)

Maor Jean, an Israeli soldier, died of injuries sustained during the suicide attack in Netanya, raising the death toll from Tuesday's attack to five, hospital officials said. (Reuters)

Israeli soldiers raided the house of a British citizen in Nablus killing Mohammed Alassi, 28 and arresting a second man. According to Israeli army sources, Mr. Alassi was a local leader of the Islamic Jihad militant group responsible for a string of planned attacks against Israel. Others in Nablus said he was a member of Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who harshly condemned the previous day's bombing, criticized the Israeli raid into Nablus and called on all sides to show restraint. "That is what we call a cycle of dirty violence; we believe that this will lead only to the destruction of the peace process." (AP, Ha'aretz)

Saraya al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for firing three homemade rockets at the Israeli town of Sderot. In a statement, the group said, "This shelling is a response to the daily crimes of the occupation forces and the assassination of a Palestinian resident in the city of Nablus in the West Bank this morning." An Israeli army spokesman told *Israel Radio* that one of the rockets had exploded near the village of Sabir in Sderot and had caused damage to buildings, but that no one had been injured. (Xinhua)

PA police shot and wounded five Hamas gunmen who refused to stop at a northern Gaza Strip roadblock, security officials said. Gunmen later attacked a PA police station with gunfire and grenades. No injuries were reported, but two police cars were burned. (AP, Xinhua)

A metal plant in the central Gaza Strip city of Deir Al Balah was hit after IDF helicopters carried out air strikes. Witnesses also said that Hamas cultural centres in Gaza City and Khan Yunis had been bombarded. No injuries were reported in these attacks. The IDF said the buildings were used to manufacture and store weapons. The helicopters also fired missiles at a car that drove near Deir Al Balah, but apparently missed the target, witnesses said. (Xinhua)

In a statement issued following an emergency meeting, the Arab League called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council and the General Assembly to take action to stop the construction of Israel's contentious West Bank barrier. (DPA)

In Ramallah, Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer met separately with PA President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia and Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa. Mr. Fischer told the Palestinian leaders that Israel's withdrawal next month from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements would not be the end of international efforts to bring peace to the region. He said, "Our policy is not fixated on Gaza, but seeks an independent, peaceful and democratic Palestinian State. This is the objective of the [Road Map](#) ." After the meetings, Mr. Fischer told a press conference that "Terrorism will have no positive results, and there will be no chance to establish an independent Palestinian State as long as violence and terrorism continue." (AFP, AP, DPA)

Hamas political bureau chief, Khaled Mashaal, told AP in a telephone interview from Damascus that his group and other Palestinian factions were still committed to a truce agreed upon with Israel, despite the latest attack in Netanya. Mr. Mashaal warned that continued Israeli violations might renew confrontations and end the four-month-old ceasefire. He said, "Israel is provoking the Palestinian factions to force them to break the truce". Mr. Mashaal said that Israel had failed to commit itself to the conditions of the truce, citing more than 6,000 breaches that had killed more than 47 Palestinians and wounded hundreds of others. (AP)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas agreed to let a follow-up committee of various factions observe a planned Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, officials said Thursday. The committee consists of 13 factions and included Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and left-wing parties. The committee is headed by legislator Ibrahim Abu-Najja. (Xinhua)

PA President Abbas was scheduled to head to Gaza to hold talks with leaders of various factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, PA spokesman told reporters. He said the talks "are aimed at strengthening agreements reached in Cairo between the factions and the PA, mainly on the period of calmness." "President Abbas demanded to hold an urgent meeting with the factions in Gaza following the attack in Netanya," Mr. Abu Rudeineh added. (AP, AFP)

The Israeli Government declared Gaza a closed military zone to prevent extremists from entering the main settlement block ahead of the planned evacuation of 8,500 settlers next month. The move came as the army also sealed Gaza and the West Bank to Palestinians entering and leaving in response to the attack in Netanya on Tuesday. (The Financial Times, The Independent)

In a statement, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) said that in Dahiat Al-Salaam, in East Jerusalem, the Hannafiya family's home was demolished and 8 people were rendered homeless for lack of a building permit, and added that the Jerusalem municipality made it very hard for Palestinians in East Jerusalem to receive building permits. The statement said another home had been destroyed in Ein Luze, near the Al-Bustan area in Silwan. The recently completed home belonged to the Musa Siam family who had yet to move in. (Wafa)

PA President Abbas met in Ramallah with James Wolfensohn, the Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy, to help oversee Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The discussion included the preparations made by the PA for the withdrawal and reconstruction and development, including the future of the crossing points, the airport and the harbour. (Wafa)

The Israeli High Court rejected a request by the Israeli attorney Danny Zeidman to issue an injunction suspending construction work of the wall in Shofat, in Jerusalem. (Wafa)

PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef ordered the use of force against militants who fired rockets at Israeli targets after an urgent meeting with PA President Abbas. The meeting was also attended by chiefs of PA police and security apparatuses. "Instructions to the security forces are clear. They should carry out every needed firm measure, including the use of force, to prevent any action of firing rockets," Mr. Yousef told reporters in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Yousef also declared a state of emergency and deployed police and security reinforcements, mainly in northern Gaza Strip, to stop militants from firing rockets. (AP)

PA President Abbas criticized the Israeli raid into Nablus and called on all sides to show restraint. "That is what we call a cycle of dirty violence," he

said. "We believe that this will lead only to the destruction of the peace process." (AFP)

US State Department Acting Spokesman Tom Casey said, "The Secretary [of State Rice] did speak with PA President Abbas yesterday and Assistant Secretary Welch met with him yesterday afternoon as well. In both those conversations, the Secretary reiterated her message, as that of Assistant Secretary Welch that the Palestinian leadership needed to take immediate actions to find those who were responsible for the recent bombing in Israel and bring them to justice. And while President Abbas' condemnation of this heinous attack was welcomed, they were now are looking to the Palestinian Authority to take some concrete steps to bring those who planned and supported this attack to justice." (www.state.gov) President Bush issued a directive to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice formally waiving restrictions on providing money to the PA. He also notified the Congress of his decision. (Reuters)

At a ceremony held in Gaza, visiting EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana handed over two anti-explosive armoured vehicles and 20 motorcycles, donated by Spain and Britain, to the PA police. Mr. Solana said the EU was willing to train 1,000 Palestinian police officers, and added that after Israel's withdrawal, the Palestinian police was expected to take charge. (Xinhua)

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said at a press briefing in Beijing that China opposed Israel's building of the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which would escalate Israeli-Palestinian confrontations. He said that the building of the separation wall would go against the efforts made by the international community and all sides concerned to promote peace in the region (Xinhua)

15

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired six rockets at the Sderot area of southern Israel without causing any casualties, a military source said. (AFP)

Two houses in the Gaza Strip settlement of "Neve Dekalim" were heavily damaged by mortar shells. A woman and a child were treated for light wounds at the scene. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF divided the Gaza Strip into three isolated areas by posting roadblocks on the main roads. (AFP)

The IDF arrested 10 Islamic Jihad suspects in the West Bank, the military said. (AP)

The IDF launched an air strike on a van carrying Hamas militants and a cache of rockets in a Gaza City street, killing four people. (AP)

Two Hamas militants were killed and one, a senior member of the Hamas military wing, seriously wounded in what PA security officials said was a targeted Israeli missile strike on a house near the town of Salfit in the West Bank. (AP)

Fifteen Israeli helicopter gunships killed seven members of Hamas in separate air strikes on two vehicles, one near Nablus in the West Bank and the other in Gaza City. At least 19 Qassam rockets and dozens of mortar shells were fired by Palestinians in Gaza, with 5 falling in or near Sderot, Israel. (AP)

PA security personnel clashed with Hamas militants in Gaza City. Two teenage bystanders were killed, 25 other Palestinians, including nine security officers, were rushed to hospital with injuries, medical sources said. (AFP)

David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Sharon's office, charged that the PA was responsible for the recent attacks because of its "refusal to fight terror." He added that, "We will not allow our citizens to be murdered, and if the Palestinian Authority does not take necessary steps to prevent terror, we will." (AP)

Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Shalah said that all conditions for an unofficial truce had evaporated. Speaking in an interview with the Beirut daily, *As-Safir*, he said, "We hope the conflict with Israel will not turn into an inter-Palestinian struggle." (UPI)

Israel ruled out delaying its scheduled pullout from the Gaza Strip. "These attacks will not alter our determination to implement the disengagement plan on schedule, but if they continue, we will respond in a much tougher manner," said a source close to Prime Minister Sharon. (AFP)

"Hamas has been in communication with several officials from the Palestinian Authority and factions in a bid to end the clashes," a spokesman for the group said. "Despite this violation from national security, we need to protect national unity and stop the bloodshed. We hope to arrive at a solution to end this crisis," he added. Mohammed al-Hindi, a leader of Islamic Jihad group in the Gaza Strip, said his group had begun talks with Hamas. "After this meeting, there will be another meeting with the Palestinian Authority. Islamic Jihad calls for an urgent meeting with all factions," he told AFP, demanding an end to "all kinds of provocation and violence." (AFP)

Hamas demanded the dismissal of PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef. (AFP)

Jean-Baptiste Mattei, spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry, said, "On the eve of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the cooperation of the two parties is essential for re-launching the peace process... the attacks against Israeli civilians, such as the recent attack at Netanya and the rocket attacks on Sderot which killed one Israeli woman, were unjustifiable and contrary to the interests of the Palestinian people". (AP)

Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Conventions, issued a [report](#) submitted pursuant to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 that requested Switzerland to conduct consultations and report to the General Assembly, including with regard to the possibility of resuming the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Convention. (Reuters)

16

The Israeli army arrested 30 members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and fired rockets from helicopter gunships at three sites suspected of being weapons factories in Gaza City and Khan Yunis. Of those arrested, 26 belonged to Hamas; 16 were arrested near Hebron, 5 near Nablus, 3 in Bethlehem and 2 in Tulkarm. Two members of Islamic Jihad were arrested in Bethlehem and two more in Tulkarm. (AP, *The Washington Post*)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia called on "all factions to unite in such a dangerous stage in Palestinian history." He said the news media had promoted tension and condemned Israeli air strikes and arrest efforts to "push Palestinians into internal strife." (AP)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas, in a televised address, said he would enforce the principle of "one government, one law and one gun," and would not tolerate "any party imposing its private agenda upon our people." He called on all Palestinian factions to keep the ceasefire that had been agreed upon. He said that Palestinians faced "difficult moments" and that "chaos among Palestinians is in Israel's interests, and we will not allow a civil war." (AP, *Ha'aretz*, *The Washington Post*)

The following statement, attributable to the spokesman of the Secretary-General, was issued on violence in the Middle East.

The Secretary General views with alarm the renewed violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the past fortnight.

The recent suicide bombing in Netanya and rockets fired from Gaza killing innocent Israeli civilians are shocking and condemnable. There is a pressing need to put a stop to such actions. The recent move by the Palestinian Authority security forces to act to prevent them was a welcome development.

Israel has resumed forceful action in the face of the serious deterioration that has shattered the lull in violence of the past few months. There should be no doubt about Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, but it must be exercised proportionately and in conformity with international law.

The Secretary-General strongly believes that at this critical moment a glimmer of a better future with two States living side-by-side in peace still exists. It is therefore essential that all committed to a negotiated settlement remain focused on this goal.

(UN press release SG/SM/10005)

17

An Israeli sniper killed Saeed Seyam, a commander of Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. He was hit in the neck while sitting on the roof of his home. The army sniper fired a single shot at Mr. Seyam from an IDF outpost in the nearby settlement of "Ganei Tal."

(Ha'aretz)

IDF troops fired at two Palestinians reported to be approaching the "Netzarim" settlement in the Gaza Strip, killing one of them. (Ha'aretz)

Six Israelis were hurt by mortar fire directed at the "Gush Katif" settlements. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz told the Cabinet meeting that the PA had been acting against " Hamas and other terror organizations," but that it must do more. Two Palestinians were killed and 30 others wounded, at least half of them Palestinian security personnel, in clashes over the weekend in the Gaza Strip between the PA Security Services and members of Hamas. (Ha'aretz)

The Egyptian security delegation, which arrived in the Gaza Strip, met separately with the PA and Hamas. The delegation first met with PA President Abbas for two hours, then headed to a Gaza City hotel and held talks with Hamas leaders. The Egyptian delegation was headed by Deputy-Director of Egyptian Intelligence Gen. Mustafa Al-Buheiri. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

"We want to prevent Qassam rocket fire at all costs," PA President Abbas told journalists in Gaza. "We hope that we will not be forced to open fire against those who are firing rockets and that all parties will assume their responsibilities. On our side, as I have already said, we do not want a civil war ... this firing of rockets does not bring any benefit to Palestinians; they are even dangerous given that 90 per cent of them hit Palestinian areas ... no one has the right to take the initiative of launching rockets, we continue to be bound by the ceasefire," he further said. (AFP)

18

IDF troops arrested six Hamas members overnight in a West Bank raid. In a separate operation, troops arrested a Palestinian man carrying 200 bullets outside Nablus. (Ha'aretz)

Thousands of extra Israeli soldiers and armoured vehicles remained deployed across the border from the Gaza Strip for a second day. It is reported that they were awaiting the green light for a large-scale assault into the Gaza Strip, should rocket attacks continue. (AFP)

Yasser Abed Rabo, a member of the PLO Executive Committee said, "Israel seeks excuses for storming the Strip before implementing the withdrawal plan." He also said that Israel intended to make the Gaza Strip a big prison after evacuating all 21 settlements. (Xinhua)

Some 20,000 police and soldiers were deployed in southern Israel to block what was reported as the biggest march of the disengagement plan opponents. Organizers said marchers would try to reach Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip even though police had declared the demonstration illegal and last week barred non-residents from entering the Gaza Strip settlements. (AP, Ha'aretz)

A Palestinian girl identified as Aida Daghmarsh, 10, was killed as a result of an explosion at a home in the al-Sabra neighbourhood in Gaza City. She died instantly, according to a medical source at Dar al-Shifa hospital in Gaza, while two of her brothers sustained several wounds. (MEMC)

Palestinian paramedics in Deir Al-Balah said that Israeli troops had shot dead a Palestinian child near junction adjoining the "Kfar Darom" settlement in the central Gaza Strip. According to AFP, Ragheb Masri, 14, was shot in the chest as he walked past a line of cars waiting to pass through an IDF checkpoint. The military said it had fired warning shots ahead of vehicles attempting to run the roadblock, but that the shots had been fired into open ground where there were no pedestrians. According to Xinhua, the boy was shot in the head while sitting next to the taxi driver who tried to cross a roadblock, ignoring Israeli soldiers' orders. (AP, Xinhua)

An IDF force arrested seven Palestinians in Ramallah. Sources in the Islamic Jihad said that the seven arrested were members of the movement working for several cultural centres. (Xinhua)

Three Hamas members were wounded when a mortar shell they were preparing to fire on an Israeli settlement in the southern Gaza Strip exploded prematurely. One of the militants was reportedly in critical condition. (AFP, Xinhua)

During meetings with the Egyptian delegation to the Gaza Strip, Hamas agreed to stop rocket and mortar fire and resume the truce, and to end the "battle of declarations" with the PA and cease calling for the dismissal of PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef. Hamas officials emphasized that the organization's commitment to the truce depended on Israel's actions and that it considered itself free to respond to perceived truce violations by Israel. (Ha'aretz)

An Egyptian official said that Egypt's mediation efforts between the PA and other Palestinian groups would not fail as Palestinians rejected civil war. Chief of the Shura Council's Arab Affairs and National Security Committee Mohammed Bassyouni told BBC that if one of the factions went beyond the limits, this did not in any way mean the intra-Palestinian fighting was imminent. AP reported that mediators had been delivering a stern message to Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and other groups that the truce deal did not give them the right to retaliate for perceived truce violations. Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders had insisted they did have such a right. Hamas has also said it was still committed to the ceasefire agreement. (AP, BBC, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

19

IDF troops killed two Palestinians in Al-Yamoun, west of Jenin, after a brief gunfight. They were identified as Ibrahim Abahra, 28, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades leader in Al-Yamoun and a leading faction member in the Jenin area, and his cousin, Warrad Abahra, 26. Both men, former militants in Islamic Jihad, had switched their allegiance to the Brigades and were wanted by Israeli troops since the beginning of the intifada. An IDF statement accused the two of masterminding suicide attacks and arming militants, and said that they headed both the Islamic Jihad and the "Tanzim" infrastructures in the village. (AFP, AP, www.idf.il)

The IDF said it would lift restrictions on Palestinian traffic by reopening the major two roadblocks that had been in place since 15 July, thereby cancelling "the division of the Gaza Strip into three parts". The roadblock west of the "Netzarim" junction was removed the previous night, and the "Gush Katif" junction was reopened to Palestinian vehicles. (Reuters, www.idf.il, Xinhua)

The IDF said a mortar fired by Palestinians at the "Gush Katif" settlement overnight had slightly injured a Thai worker and caused severe damage to one house. In the eastern Gaza Strip, the IDF said a mortar fired by Palestinians at the "Gush Katif" settlement overnight had slightly injured a Thai worker and caused severe damage to one of the houses. In the eastern Gaza Strip, the armed wing of the DFLP claimed responsibility for firing two homemade missiles at an IDF post. In a number of other attacks at Israeli settlements and IDF posts in the Gaza Strip, no injuries or damage were reported. IDF and border police sappers also detonated an explosive device near the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. (www.idf.il, Xinhua)

A gunfight erupted between Hamas militants and Palestinian security officials in the Gaza Strip's Jabaliya refugee camp when security forces

reportedly tried to arrest Hamas members wanted in connection with the recent shooting of a Palestinian security officer. Earlier in the day, two Hamas-affiliated institutions, including the Al-Arabi Centre for Research for Studies and Documentaries, were burned down. Several people were wounded in the shootout. Hamas and the PA each released a statement blaming the other for the violence. The sides were set to meet later in the day to resolve their differences. (AFP, AP)

Israeli police put forces on one of the highest alert levels as a standoff developed between thousands of security forces and Gaza withdrawal opponents determined to march into the Gaza Strip despite a ban. Thousands of police gathered at Kfar Meimon, and thousands more were on the way, said police spokesman Avi Zelba, who added that police country-wide were on alert for immediate deployment to the area. The last time police had declared this level of alert was when Yasser Arafat died in November 2004. The only higher alert is during a war. Later in the day, Israeli police encircled an encampment of thousands of Gaza pullout opponents and pushed back a surging crowd trying to march to the Gaza Strip in a show of support for Jewish settlements marked for demolition next month. (AP)

Israel Radio reported that the PA rejected a Hamas demand to create a joint committee to govern the Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Hamas and Fatah agreed to pull their gunmen off the streets of northern Gaza as a first step towards easing tension between the factions, a Palestinian source said. The decision was made after the two groups discussed the confrontations that had raged in recent days in Gaza. (Reuters)

20

The Israeli army said that Palestinians had fired two mortar shells at a settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no injuries or damage. Palestinians also fired at an Israeli force near the border with Egypt, causing no injuries. The army also said it had arrested seven wanted Islamic Jihad members in Yamoun village, west of Jenin. (www.idf.il)

Israeli soldiers shot and wounded a Palestinian attempting to enter a closed military zone in the northern Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Xinhua)

Palestinian medical sources said 25-year-old Mohammed Ghannam, a member of the Palestinian security force, died of wounds inflicted last week by Israeli fire when the IDF reoccupied the West Bank city of Tulkarm. (Xinhua)

Gunmen attacked the homes of the head of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service, Rashid Abu Shbak, and the Gaza Strip's Fatah leader Abdallah Franji. At least seven people were injured in the exchanges of fire with bodyguards, security and Hamas sources said. Both attacks happened in the Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood of southern Gaza City. The exchanges imperilled a tentative agreement that had been reached overnight between members of Hamas and Fatah to stop targeting each other. Ismail Haniya, a Hamas leader, confirmed that the movement was working with Fatah leaders to end the tension and remove gunmen from both factions from the streets. PA Prisoner Affairs Minister Sufian Abu Zaydah said that both movements had agreed to "cease all activity that would increase tension between the two sides." (AFP)

The International Solidarity Movement said in a statement that the Israeli army had arrested a number of foreign and Palestinian peace activists protesting in the village of Bil'en near the West Bank city of Jenin. The ISM said that the activists and the residents of the village had closed the road where Israeli bulldozers were to do work to build the separation wall in Bil'en. The protestors tied themselves to iron boxes and blocked the way of the bulldozers, after which the Israeli army attacked the human chain. (Xinhua)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia said that the PA represents protection and cover for all Palestinians. In a press conference in Ramallah, Mr. Qureia stressed the need to end tension between the PA and Hamas. He said that efforts had been exerted yesterday to overcome the situation. Regarding the Israeli escalation, Mr. Qureia said "Israel wants an internal fight, and we should protect ourselves". (Wafa)

The Israeli Parliament overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to delay the Gaza Strip pullout for up to a year. A series of bills put forward by a number of MKs, including two former cabinet ministers, were rejected after a stormy debate by a vote of 69-41, with two abstentions. The rejection of the bills was a further setback to opponents of disengagement who have been frustrated in their attempts to stage a mass solidarity march towards the "Gush Katif" settlement block in southern Gaza. (AFP)

For the third day through a standoff, thousands of Gaza pullout opponents were stranded in a camp in Kfar Maimon farming village, in southern Israel, and blocked by 20,000 soldiers and police from marching to the coastal strip to reinforce Jewish settlers there. Settler leaders had been urging supporters to start marching toward the Gaza Strip. Israeli security forces have been mobilized since Monday to prevent pullout opponents from defying a military ban on entering Gaza to reinforce the 8,500 settlers steadfast there to resist the evacuation next month. (AP)

Senior Egyptian intelligence officials were to remain in Gaza throughout the pullout, an Egyptian official said on condition of anonymity. They came to Gaza several days ago amidst fighting, both between Israelis and Palestinians and among Palestinians. He also said that Egyptian officers were to arrive in the Palestinian territory in the next two days to train and advise Palestinian security forces who would deploy in areas Israel was to evacuate. (AP)

The Director-General of the PA Ministry of Tourism, Moin Sadeq, said that Israeli troops had the previous day razed the remains of a Byzantine church constructed in 586 AD, near Deir Al-Balah City in the central Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

Adam Ereli, the US State Department deputy spokesman, said at the daily briefing in Washington that Near Eastern Affairs Assistant Secretary David Welch was to depart for the region this evening to have meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials in advance of Secretary Rice's visit. He added that, "we have seen a number of actions by both sides that are important and noteworthy. Actions by the Palestinian Authority to move against Palestinian militants and terrorist organizations who are trying to use violence to sabotage what is a historic opportunity for peace, efforts by the Israelis to both defend themselves and act with restraint. This is a critical time." He went on to say that, "we are on the verge of something, as I said, truly historic and a real step forward in advancing the road map." (www.state.gov)

21

Palestinians opened fire at an Israeli army post near the "Kissufim" crossing between the southern Gaza Strip and Israel. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli soldier was slightly wounded when a mortar shell launched by Palestinians hit a military base near the "Neve Dekalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinians also fired at Israeli soldiers at the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, causing no injuries. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

A 10-year-old Palestinian boy was killed and seven others were wounded when a rocket aimed by Palestinians at a settlement backfired and slammed into a house in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. (AFP, Ynet)

Israeli officials said that the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip could be moved forward in a bid to avoid further Israeli protests. Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told *Israel Public Radio* : "From a legal point of view, it is possible to begin this operation from 22 July ... Personally I am in favour of a more rapid withdrawal after the demonstrations of the last few days." An official in Prime Minister Sharon's office said, "We are studying the possibility of bringing forward the date of the withdrawal, as it is possible from a legal point of view. ... After the demonstrations by opponents of the disengagement over the last few days and the attempts to infiltrate Gush Katif, it is possible that it could be done more quickly in order to avoid new confrontations." (AFP, AP, BBC, Reuters)

Prime Minister Sharon said during a visit to the "Ariel" settlement between Nablus and Ramallah, "This block will always be an inseparable part of the

State of Israel and be territorially contiguous with the State of Israel like the other blocks.” On the issue of the status of Jerusalem, he said, “I hear MKs saying that I am dividing Jerusalem. I do not intend even to discuss Jerusalem, and even those inciters know that this is a lie.” (AFP, www.pmo.gov.il)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived in the region for talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials. Ms. Rice met with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom in Jerusalem, and reportedly said that the United States and Russia planned to hold a regional conference after the implementation of the disengagement, aimed at advancing relations between Israel and Arab States in the Gulf and North Africa. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Security Council convened to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, upon request by the Arab Group. UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Alvaro de Soto made a statement, as did Israeli, Palestinian and numerous other delegations. (AFP)

22

An unarmed Palestinian was killed in Hebron when a Palestinian gunman reportedly opened fire on a military outpost and Israeli soldiers returned fire, wounding a Palestinian passer-by identified as Ihsan Abu Hamdiyeh, 18. Israeli media said the gunman had escaped. Two soldiers were reportedly slightly injured in the attack. Mr. Abu Hamdiyeh later died of his wounds in a local hospital. (AFP, DPA)

The Israeli army said that Palestinians had opened fire at the following targets in the southern Gaza Strip: an Israeli force and an army post guarding the “Neve Dekalim” settlement; an army post guarding the “Rafiah Yam” settlement; and an army force patrolling near the “Atzmona” settlement. There were no injuries or damage in those incidents. The army also said that an explosive device had been activated against an army force near the border with Egypt, without causing injuries. The army arrested a wanted Palestinian in Jenin and two others in Qabatiya, south of Jenin. (www.idf.il) An additional Hamas member wounded in the Israeli air strike in Gaza City on 15 July, Hamed Adah, 22, died of his injuries. (AFP)

On the eve of talks with US Secretary of State Rice in Ramallah, President Abbas said that the Palestinians were ready to coordinate the Gaza pullout with Israel but were being left in the dark on crucial issues. “I will tell her, ‘Dr. Rice, we need answers from the Israelis. Is Gaza going to be turned into a large prison? The Israelis are not cooperating’”, he told *Reuters* in an interview. (*Reuters*)

US Secretary of State Rice met with Prime Minister Sharon at his ranch in the Negev desert. “The discussions were essentially centred around the measures which should be taken to ensure that [the disengagement] goes smoothly, with a minimum amount of friction” [with the Palestinians], a source close to Mr. Sharon said. The source added that the two had also discussed economic aid to the Palestinians to be supervised by the Middle East Quartet’s Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement, James Wolfensohn. (AFP)

The Russian Federation welcomed the US initiative to hold an international conference on the Middle East put forward by Secretary Rice during her trip to Israel, the Foreign Ministry said. The US and Russia will sponsor the conference, which will also deal with regional programmes in the Middle East, Ms. Rice had said in Jerusalem the day before. The idea “is consonant with the initiative President Vladimir Putin put forward during his April trip to the Middle East,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko told the *Itar-Tass* news agency, adding that the conference should proceed in a broad format and involve Israel, the Palestinians, the Quartet and regional parties. An international forum can “assess new regional realities after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and part of the West Bank and define settlement ways, primarily in the road map format and a broader context,” Mr. Yakovenko said. (*Xinhua*)

23

Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Israeli cars on the road from the “Gush Katif” settlement block to the “Kissufim” crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel. The shots killed a Jerusalem couple in their 50s who had made a weekend visit to settlers in the Gaza Strip. Five civilians were hurt, the IDF said. After the shooting, Israeli troops in the area clashed with the gunmen, killing one. The second gunman was killed in a pursuit. Grenades and assault rifles were found on their bodies. A third gunman reportedly escaped. Three groups jointly claimed responsibility: Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committee. PA President Abbas said such attacks did not serve the national interest and that the PA would “exert every possible effort in order to stop these harmful operations.” “Israel will not make its peace with this terrorism,” Prime Minister Sharon told his Cabinet, adding, “I made clear to the Secretary of State [Rice] that our response would be of a different kind, using very tough new measures.”

US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said that the shooting “underscores the importance of the parties working individually and in cooperation to maintain an atmosphere of calm, free from violence, during this period prior to the withdrawal and during the Gaza disengagement.” (AP, *Reuters*, *Xinhua*)

A would-be suicide bomber, who had cut a hole in the Gaza-Israel border fence, was caught with a belt packed with some 10 kg of explosives near kibbutz Nir Am, an Israeli communal farm just outside the Gaza Strip. Initial reports said that the bomber, Jihad Shehadeh, 18, was a nephew of Salah Shehadeh, a Hamas member killed in an Israeli airstrike in 2002. The IDF said that Jihad Shehadeh was a member of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and that he told interrogators he planned to blow himself up in the Tel Aviv area. However, a Brigades spokesman denied that the youth was a member of his organization. Israeli police in Jaffa also arrested a 25-year-old Palestinian from the Gaza Strip who had infiltrated into Israel with Jihad Shehadeh and aided him in the attempted terrorist attack. (AP, www.idf.il)

In a statement made in the Gaza Strip, Hamas condemned the terrorist attack in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, the same day, saying that it “damages the security and stability of our countries and harms our national and Islamic interests and causes, especially the Palestinian cause”. (UPI)

US Secretary of State Rice urged Israel not to turn the Gaza Strip into a walled enclave after it withdraws troops and settlers. In remarks with President Abbas in Ramallah, she said that economic development of the territory was the key to the success of Israeli-Palestinian peace. “That means that when the Israelis withdraw from Gaza, it cannot be a sealed or isolated area, with the Palestinian people closed in after that withdrawal,” Ms. Rice said, adding, “we are committed to openness and freedom of movement for the Palestinian people”. On the question of what to do with the houses and greenhouses the settlers would leave behind, she said, “I think we can close many of these issues very expeditiously with enough will and perhaps a change in view here or change in view there”. “Each side is expecting answers from the other”, she said. “My job is to keep reminding people that they want to have this tied down by the time the withdrawal begins,” Ms. Rice told reporters. (AP, *Reuters*, *Xinhua*)

A Jordanian group said that the Israeli authorities had refused entry by 150 European peace activists into the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Right of Palestinian Return Committee and Jordanian opposition parties called on the international community and human rights organizations to condemn the Israeli action. Spokesman for the Committee, Talaat Abu Othman, told reporters that the Israeli authorities “prevented the convoy of activists to complete its mission to enter the Palestinian territories after interrogating its members for nine hours.” The peace activists launched their journey from the European Parliament in Strasbourg a few weeks ago and arrived in Amman on 18 July. They attempted to continue into the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 19 July but were turned back by the Israeli authorities. (UPI)

24

Two Palestinian groups, one linked to Fatah and the other to PFLP, said in a joint statement that their militants had fired two rockets at the “Gush Katif” settlement block in the southern Gaza Strip. The statement said that the action was taken in response to the daily crimes committed against the Palestinian people, in particular the stabbing of a Palestinian teenager in the West Bank by settlers and the killing of a Palestinian in Hebron last week. (*Xinhua*)

An armed Palestinian broke into an apartment in central Rafah where four US citizens lived and kidnapped Harry Borrey, 75, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) reported. The gunman ordered Mr. Borrey into a civilian car in which three masked and armed men were waiting and took him to an unknown destination. An hour later, Palestinian policemen found him, unharmed, in a school. It was not clear why he was kidnapped, the PCHR said, adding that it was the second kidnapping in as many weeks. (UPI)

An unmanned Israeli plane fired two missiles at a group of Palestinians in the Tal Za'atar area of Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. No casualties were caused by the strike. An explosion was also reported near the Khan Yunis refugee camp earlier in the day, shortly after the ambush at the "Kissufim" crossing. Local residents initially reported that an Israeli helicopter had fired a missile, but Palestinian security officials said that the explosion had been caused by a rocket fired by Palestinian militants. (Xinhua)

Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres told *Israel Radio* that there was "no chance of reaching a conclusive agreement with the Palestinian Authority without giving back Hebron and dividing Jerusalem." He also said the "Gush Etzion" settlement block, between Bethlehem and Hebron, would not be returned to the Palestinians under any future peace accord. (IMEMC)

A meeting between Israel's Defence Minister Mofaz and PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef ended in mutual recrimination as the two sides failed to make progress on coordinating Israel's Gaza withdrawal. *Ha'aretz* reported that Mr. Mofaz had demanded that the PA apprehend the gunmen responsible for the killing of an Israeli couple at Kissufim junction. "Find those who sent the murderers. If you do not, we will," he reportedly told Mr. Yousef. "The meeting ended in failure and had no results," said the Minister's spokesman, Tawfiq Abu Hussa. "We obtained neither answers to our questions on the calendar or mechanism of withdrawal nor on the future of the buildings and infrastructures of the settlements which are to be evacuated." It was the first high-level meeting since an Islamic Jihad suicide bombing killed five Israelis in Netanya on 12 July. (AFP, *Ha'aretz*, Xinhua)

PA Minister of Civil Affairs Mohammed Dahlan said in a press statement that the PA had not received answers from Israel concerning the control of crossings and a safe corridor between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. "Israel, till this moment, has not given clear answers to the Palestinian demands on border crossings and the secure road," he said. "In case we do not get any response, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza will turn the Strip into a big prison." (Xinhua)

The Department of Agriculture and Municipal Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, in cooperation with UNRWA, is to build a "complete city on the rubble of the Israeli settlements which will be evacuated", the state news agency *WAM* said. It said that the development, to be named the Khalifa bin Zayed City after UAE President Sheikh Khalifa, would house 30,000 to 40,000 Palestinians at a cost of at least \$100 million. UAE has funded three previous construction projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to rebuild homes destroyed by Israeli offensives in Gaza, Rafah and the Jenin refugee camp. (AFP, Reuters)

Mahmoud Al-Abrash, Speaker of the Syrian People's Assembly, in a meeting with visiting Palestinian National Council Chairman Salem Zanon, underlined the importance of unity among the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, *SANA* news agency reported. Syria has always backed intra-Palestinian dialogue, Mr. Abrash told Mr. Zanon. (Xinhua)

25

Islamic Jihad's armed wing, Saraya al-Quds, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for attacking an IDF jeep in the southern Gaza Strip. The two groups said in a joint leaflet that a group of militants, members of the two groups, jointly detonated a roadside bomb under an Israeli army jeep east of Rafah town. After detonating the roadside bomb, the militants opened fire at the soldiers who ran away as the jeep caught fire. *Israel Radio* earlier reported that Palestinian militants had opened fire at an Israeli army patrol near the settlement of "Atzmona". (Xinhua)

PA President Abbas announced his imminent, temporary relocation to the Gaza Strip. "I am going now to Gaza to stay for the entire disengagement period to follow all the details about the disengagement from Gaza," he told Palestinian radio. "I will have contact with all the Palestinian parties," he added. (AFP)

Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, Israel's Gaza commander, told the Knesset's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee in a closed-door session that the IDF was prepared to evacuate the settlers within three weeks instead of four, as originally planned, *Israel Radio* said. Defence Minister Mofaz and other security officials had urged Prime Minister Sharon the previous day to complete the evacuation without pausing to assess it at various stages, a right the Cabinet assumed several months ago. Mr. Sharon's focal point for the evacuation, Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, backed the request for an uninterrupted withdrawal, saying that the Cabinet could review the evacuation process without holding it up. Nearly 60,000 Israeli soldiers and police are to be deployed to ensure that the pullout from the Gaza Strip is completed as quickly as possible, Defence Ministry sources told *AFP*. Under the terms of a plan approved by Prime Minister Sharon, no troops would be left in the Gaza Strip beyond 3 October, coinciding with Rosh Hashanah, the start of the Jewish New Year in 2005. (AFP, AP)

The Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee approved the second and third readings of amendments to the "Intifada Law" that would reduce to a minimum the ability of Palestinians to sue for damages incurred during the intifada. According to the Government-proposed amendment, which would be enacted retroactively to July 2000, Palestinians would be able to sue for damages in only two types of cases: when an IDF soldier was convicted of traffic-related charges; and when a Palestinian suffered physical harm while being held in military detention. Palestinians would also be permitted to appeal courts' rejections of compensation claims before a special committee. MK Zehava Gal-On (Yahad) said the amendments "placed a stain on Israel's law books. The State, in shaking off responsibility and [acting] negligently, is granting immunity to illegal actions by the security forces – and this is discrimination." (*Ha'aretz*)

More than 5,000 Palestinian policemen were to prevent militants from attacking withdrawing Israelis during the disengagement from the Gaza Strip, according to *Yediot Aharonot*. Some 55,000 Israeli soldiers and policemen were to take part in the withdrawal and evacuation of settlers. The army also planned to call up 10,000 reservists to replace regular soldiers who would be pulled out of their jobs and sent to the Gaza Strip. The evacuation was to begin on 17 August and the area would be handed over to the PA on 3 October. According to the army's plan, some 24 hours after the settlers leave, tractors and bulldozers would move into the settlements and ram the houses to topple them. When that was done, Palestinian workers were to move in to clear the rubble. (UPI)

26

Two members of the Islamic Jihad were arrested by the Israeli army in the West Bank. Sources said Sofian Quteibi was arrested in Hebron after a gun battle with soldiers after having been shot and injured in the leg. In Tulkarm, Palestinian residents said that Sammer Abu Hakem, another Islamic Jihad member, was arrested after soldiers found three rifles and a pistol in his home. (*Ha'aretz*, Xinhua)

Islamic Jihad members continued to fire homemade mortars at Israel. Saraya al-Quds claimed that it had fired two rockets at Sderot, Israel. *Israel Radio* reported that five Israelis were treated for shock caused by the rocket attack. The attack also caused damage to a few cars in the neighbourhood. (*Ha'aretz*, Xinhua)

Palestinians opened fire on an IDF post near "Rafiah Yam" in the Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported. It was also reported that IDF troops had discovered a cave packed with military equipment in the West Bank. Two Palestinian youths were apprehended in a truck trying to illegally enter the "Gush Katif" settlement in the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF demolished a Palestinian home at Jabal Al-Mukkaber village, south east of Jerusalem. Witnesses said that the military stormed the area and prevented its residents from taking out property before the demolition began. (Wafa)

Jerusalem's Israeli municipality gave preliminary approval for the building of 21 homes for Israelis in Jerusalem's Old City. The project would involve the building of homes and a synagogue in the heart of the Muslim quarter of the city. Approval by the Interior and Housing Ministries would still be needed before construction could begin. Palestinian officials condemned the plan which they said would start friction between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem's Old City. "This is pouring fuel on the fire. We ask the international community to intervene immediately and stop such actions," according to PA Senior Negotiations Affairs Minister Mr. Saeb Erakat. *Wafa* reported that the new housing units would be erected in the Bab Al-Zahera section of East Jerusalem. (*Reuters, Wafa*)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas convened the chiefs of security and police services in the Gaza Strip to discuss preparations for the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. (*Xinhua*)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia urged the US to consider an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as the first step in implementing the [Road Map](#). Mr. Qureia told reporters that the withdrawal in August must be followed by preparations for further withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem. "The step must also be followed by recognizing a Palestinian State for the sake of achieving a fair peace that guarantees security and stability in the region," he said. He added that the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip would be meaningless if Israel continued building the wall and isolating and seizing East Jerusalem. During the inauguration of a 3-day workshop on elected local bodies of Ramallah, Mr. Qureia said that the PA was determined to continue democratic reform on all levels. He stressed that legislative elections would be held as soon as possible after the Palestinian Legislative Council approved the new election law. Mr. Qureia added that the date would be fixed in coordination with all groups. (*UPI, Xinhua*)

The Strategic Assessments Initiative, financed by the Governments of Canada and the Netherlands, issued a study conducted to identify ways in which international donors could help the PA reform its security services. The study was prepared in close coordination with Lt. Gen. William E. Ward, US Security Coordinator in the Middle East. The study identified problems that faced Palestinian security services, including lack of equipment, shortages of ammunition and means of communication (beyond mobile phones) and of all-terrain vehicles. Other problems included the continuing power of personalities and clans, which often created informal chains of command, weakening the authority of PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef. Nick Thorpe of the BBC said that the problems were closely tied to the history of the conflict in recent years, such as the destruction of the Palestinian police infrastructure by the Israelis since the start of the second intifada. The report praised the PA's continuing efforts to streamline its forces, but stated that Palestinian police were caught between the far better-equipped Palestinian militant groups on the one side and the Israeli army on the other. (*BBC News, Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz decided to recall Israeli troops from the border between Egypt and Gaza during Israel's pullout from the Palestinian territory, a Ministry spokeswoman said. "We will probably sign an agreement with Egypt next week in which Egypt will deploy 750 soldiers along the [Salah al-Din] Philadelphi corridor, so our troops can leave at the same [time] as the rest of the Gaza Strip," she told *AFP*. She said that Amos Gilad, a senior official in the Defence Ministry, is to travel to Egypt to finalize the deal. (*AFP*)

The US Security Coordinator in the Middle East, Lt. Gen. William Ward told the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee that "The Palestinian security sector is attempting to emerge from a fractured, corrupt and dysfunctional structure with separate fiefdoms and power centers with no clear lines of control and unresponsive to a central authority. Our focus is to assist the Palestinians in developing a security sector that is based on the rule of law and good governance, with clear lines of authority, and responsive and responsible to the elected political leadership and to the Palestinian people". Lt. Ward added, "the things that we are doing today are, in fact, precisely designed to overcome those deficiencies, and progress is occurring to do that." (*AFP*)

Following talks in London with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said that Hamas must be banned from taking part in Palestinian elections and warned that its inclusion would destroy the democratic process. Mr. Straw said the matter was being kept "under very close review." Earlier, in a breakfast briefing to reporters, Mr. Shalom said that Israel would retaliate swiftly against Palestinian militants if they tried to disrupt next month's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. (*AP*)

Israel's Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin told a closed-door meeting of MPs that Hamas was likely to ease off attacks in the Gaza Strip after next month's pullout. He said that Hamas would have a stake in easing tensions in its Gaza stronghold but would instead seek to escalate violence in the West Bank. He said there was a 50 per cent chance security forces dismantling Israeli settlements would come under Palestinian militant fire during the operation, local media reported. (*AFP*)

The chairman of Egypt's Suez Canal Authority, Ahmed Ali Fadel, objected to a project under study that linked the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, saying it would increase the risk of earthquakes in the Middle East. The envisaged canal, designed to generate electricity for a desalination plant and to prevent the Dead Sea from drying up, would carry 850 million tonnes of water a year. Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians signed an agreement in May for a study on the building of the canal. Mr. Fadel said that the danger related to earthquakes would be especially serious because the earth's crust is thinner in the Gulf of Aqaba compared to anywhere else in the world. The water would come from the Gulf of Aqaba, which is part of the Red Sea, be pumped uphill and then run down into the Dead Sea, which lies below sea level. He also said that the project would provide Israel with water for cooling its nuclear reactor at Dimona and the salt water pumped into the Dead Sea would increase the salinity of wells in neighbouring countries.

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The IDF wounded 23-year-old Adel Abu Khater a resident of Khan Yunis, witnesses said. Palestinians trapped at the Israeli checkpoint of Khan Yunis said that Israeli soldiers guarding the point opened fire at them, wounding Mr. Abu Khater with a live bullet in the abdomen. His condition was said to be critical. (*Wafa*)

At least 50 Israeli settlers attacked the home of Mokbel Shorab in the Al-Mawassi area, west Khan Yunis city, local sources said. The sources said that the settlers stormed the home, brutally assaulting and beating the Shorab family, mainly his daughter Roba, 25. The settlers pushed her on the ground beating her indiscriminately. (*Wafa*)

Amid intensive gunfire, at least 10 Israeli armoured vehicles and jeeps raided an eastern neighbourhood in the city of Jenin frightening away residents and keeping shops closed, Palestinian security sources and residents said. Dozens of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants confronted the Israeli soldiers with gunfire. One militant was shot and wounded during the clash. Sources said Israeli soldiers searched several buildings in the neighbourhood and remained in the area. According to Palestinian sources, the IDF troops killed an unarmed Palestinian teenager identified as Yousuf El-Hasif, 17, and wounded seven others, one seriously, during a gun battle (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

Israeli troops stationed at a main roadblock in the central Gaza Strip opened fire at Palestinian traffic and seriously wounded a 23 year-old Palestinian passenger, witnesses and medics at Nasser Hospital said. They said that Israeli soldiers had closed the roadblock for two days and only opened it today in the afternoon. In another development, dozens of Israeli soldiers stormed the building of a Palestinian flour mill at a crossroad that led to the settlement block of "Gush Katif", Palestinian security sources reported. (*Xinhua*)

An Israeli border policewoman was slightly wounded from stones thrown at troops near Al-Aida refugee camp, north of Bethlehem. The policewoman was treated at the site by medics. Elsewhere, seven Islamic Jihad militants were arrested in Al-Yamoun, west of Jenin, where a day earlier two brothers, allegedly involved in terror activities, were killed by security forces. One Islamic Jihad militant in Bethlehem and two Hamas militants in Izzawiyah and Salfit, south-east of Qalqilya, were also arrested. Israeli border police units arrested Muhammad Jiafer, a weapons dealer, in

a raid in Sawahrah, north-east of Bethlehem. In the Gaza Strip, two mortar shells were fired at a south Gaza settlement. No one was wounded in the attack. Shots were fired at an IDF post in "Neveh Dekalim" and at an IDF patrol in Rafah. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

IDF soldiers shot a Palestinian who was crawling towards the security fence that surrounded the settlement of "Netzarim" in the northern Gaza Strip. According to preliminary reports, the Palestinian was wounded. IDF sources were unable to confirm whether the Palestinian was armed or if he planned to infiltrate the settlement or plant a bomb. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

In Gaza City, PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia said that Palestinian security forces were prepared to take over areas in the Gaza Strip that Israel was planning to evacuate next month, rejecting the findings of a study by the Independent Assessments Initiatives that concluded that the Palestinian forces were bloated, poorly armed and corrupt. "The Palestinian Authority can fill the void after the evacuation," Mr. Qureia said, after visiting a training base for recruits in Gaza. "We are capable of shouldering our responsibility." "We must succeed in this mission. The world is watching us," Mr. Qureia told the forces. "Our concern is to see the occupation leaving our land and to reflect a positive image to the world about our capability." (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

The Palestinian Civil Defence Department took out advertisements on the Internet and local radio stations, telling people to stay away from the settlements after the evacuation. The ads warned that ordnance could be left behind and must be reported to the proper authorities if found. (*AP*)

PA President Mahmoud Abbas said that Prime Minister Sharon would show he does not want peace if the Gaza Strip withdrawal was the last. "We know that he wants a [Palestinian] State with temporary borders, and maybe just a pullout from Gaza, but this would mean that he does not want peace," Mr. Abbas told the Dubai-based *Al-Khaleej* newspaper. He said that Palestinians categorically refused the idea of "the State of Gaza" and another called "The West Bank State". Mr. Abbas expressed the fear that the Gaza Strip would be turned into a big jail if it were not opened enough to the outside world and the rest of Palestine. He said that Palestinians were talking with the Israelis about a safe passage that should be implemented so as to have the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single geographical entity. He said, "Real peace is the end of the occupation of all the Palestinian territories and the settlement of all final-stage issues, including (the status) of Jerusalem and the refugees. If Sharon wants peace, then this is the road to peace, and if he does not want it, then it is his business, and that means he will bear the responsibility of the troubles in the entire region and around the world." (*AFP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Sharon met with French President Jacques Chirac. Mr. Sharon, on a three-day visit to France, told reporters, "I am convinced that this visit will permit a reconciliation between the two countries and help advance the peace process which is so important for us in the Middle East". On his part, President Chirac called for a re-launch of the Middle East peace process in conjunction with the Gaza pullout, which he described as a "historic decision". He also reiterated France's position on the creation of "a viable and independent Palestinian State" that will allow Israelis to live in security. (*DPA*)

The Israeli daily *Ma'arev* reported that Israeli officers had no choice but to go ahead with a military action against Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip before Israeli troops pull out of the area for good. "There will be no choice but to prevent Palestinian attacks on the ongoing withdrawal with a heavy military intervention," the newspaper quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz as saying during a visit on 26 July to the Gaza Strip divisional headquarters of the IDF. The army had planned an operation code named "armoured fist" to protect settlements in the Gaza Strip with a security zone. OC Southern Command Maj. Gen. Dan Harel and Gaza Division Commander Brig. Gen. Aviv Kochavi said the chances that disengagement would pass off quietly were very slim, and it was much more likely that it would take place under fire. Messrs. Mofaz and Halutz were told that the IDF was becoming more and more convinced that the series of operations planned by the Southern Command aimed at distancing the settlements being evacuated from the range of Palestinian fire could become "unavoidable." According to those plans, the army would seize control of entire Palestinian towns for the period during which adjacent Israeli settlements were being evacuated. (*DPA, Ma'ariv*)

The Israeli army had dismantled a military post guarding the settlement of "Dugit" in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian security sources and witnesses said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Large numbers of Palestinian prisoners called on the International Committee of Red Cross and other human rights organizations to immediately intervene to stop the Israeli violations of human rights and denounce the maltreatment and medical negligence by Israel that had caused deterioration in their health conditions. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian Minister of Civil Affairs Mohammed Dahlan briefed PA President Abbas on his 26 July talks with Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz.

Mr. Dahlan told *Al-Jazeera* reporters in Gaza that the meeting with Mr. Mofaz was a good one and said, "We spoke about the question of safe passages which would allow Palestinians to move freely between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," via Israeli territory. Mr. Dahlan said that Israel was also willing to allow Palestinians living abroad to visit the Gaza Strip. In another press encounter, Mr. Dahlan said, "The rubble of the demolished houses will not remain in the Palestinian territories. We are pleased that the remnants of Israel's colonies will be removed from Palestinian territory." He said that Israel had recognized the necessity of a door-to-door system for the movement of goods following the Israeli evacuation from the Gaza Strip. "This back-to-back system, along with the closure policy, has led to exorbitant transportation costs and plunged the Palestinian economy into recession." He added that in the coming days, Israeli-Palestinian committees would be formed to implement the door-to-door system and improve the current situation for the movement of Palestinian goods until the door-to-door system was fully implemented. (*Xinhua*)

Defense for Children International (DCI) published a report on human rights violations against Palestinian children during 2004 entitled "Surviving the present: serving the future". The report had found that in the year under review, Palestinian children's rights had been systematically violated on a daily basis by the Israeli occupation forces. Often, the abuses were perpetrated directly against individual children who were killed, injured, arrested or humiliated by military personnel. But just as frequently, those rights violations stemmed indirectly from general attacks or collective punishments imposed upon the wider Palestinian population. Closures, curfews and movement restrictions have continued unabated, plunging the Palestinian economy further into crisis. Household income levels continued to drop, and unemployment increased to 34 per cent on average, with as many as one in three Palestinians out of work in the Gaza Strip. Education standards were declining as hundreds were routinely prevented by movement restrictions from getting to school, while many more were being forced to drop out either to help supplement diminishing family incomes or because their parents could no longer afford to send them to school. (*Wafa*, www.dci-pal.org)

The Regional Councils of Judea, Samaria and Gaza Strip (Yesha) announced that it would launch a mass march against the planned disengagement next week. The Israeli police said they would not give pullout opponents permission to march to the Gaza Strip. (*Ha'aretz*)

More than 3,000 delegates of the Christian Church "Disciples of Christ", a US Protestant denomination, overwhelmingly approved a resolution stating that Israel's separation wall had "devastating effects on the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories" and they should be compensated for their losses. (*AP*)

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Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets at the southern Israeli town of Sderot; no damage or casualties were reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

Six anti-wall protesters were slightly wounded by Israeli security forces near the West Bank villages of Bil'in and Budrus, west of Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF started the construction of a second fence along the Gaza Strip border with Israel. (*Ha'aretz*)

Jawad Abu Meghaseb, 18, being held in an Israeli military prison, was found dead in his cell. The IDF said the death was a suicide. PA Ministry of

Prisoners' Affairs said he died because he had been denied medical treatment. (AP, WAFa)

PA security sources reported that a Palestinian woman and a 4-year-old child had been seriously wounded by IDF fire in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

Israel's Vice Premier Shimon Peres called on the international community to donate tens of millions of US dollars to help upgrade the border crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. He said roughly \$120 million was needed for a new technology that would reduce the waiting time for goods and Palestinian workers to enter Israel. (AP)

Prime Minister Sharon met France's Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy for talks on Israel's upcoming withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. "I told the Prime Minister that I would go to Israel and the Palestinian Territories from 4 to 7 September, after the withdrawal from Gaza," Mr. Douste-Blazy said after the meeting. (AP, AFP)

Egypt's President Mubarak called for an emergency Arab summit to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 3 August. The aim of the summit would be to develop a joint Arab position on the developments in Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mr. Mubarak said. (UPI)

PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia held talks with the umbrella 13-member High Committee of National and Islamic Forces, representing the Palestinian factions, in an effort to ensure that the Israeli disengagement took place free of militant violence. (AFP)

Israel's Knesset extended for nine months a law that prevents Palestinians married to Israelis from obtaining Israeli citizenship. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was expected to propose as much as \$37 million in additional funds for a Gaza Strip water project sometime after the Israeli disengagement, if it went well, a State Department official said on condition of anonymity. (AP)

Israeli forces shot dead a 28-year-old Palestinian, Muayed Musa, at his house in Tulkarm, whom the army alleged helped the perpetrator of the Netanya suicide bombing on 12 July. It was not made clear whether he was armed. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

The Israeli military said that Palestinians had opened fire in two separate incidents at Israeli forces patrolling near the "Netzer Hazani" and "Atzmona" settlements. No injuries or damage were reported. Also, Palestinians opened fire at an army post near the "Neve Dkalim" settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, causing no injuries or damage. (www.idf.il)

A mortar shell was fired towards a settlement in the "Gush Katif" block in the southern Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported. (The Jerusalem Post)

Gunmen from Jenin Martyrs Brigades abducted a senior Palestinian security official, Jihad Abed, in Gaza City, according to witnesses and security officials. The motive was not immediately known. The group had, in the past, accused security officials of trying to round up its gunmen, who were former Fatah activists. (Reuters)

The following is an excerpt of a [statement](#) issued by the Vatican in response to the Israeli Foreign Ministry's complaint that Pope Benedict XVI had not mentioned the recent Netanya suicide bombing during his public appearance on 24 July while mentioning terrorist acts in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and the UK: "Not every attack against Israel could be followed by an immediate public condemnation. There are various reasons for this, among them the fact that attacks against Israel were sometimes followed by immediate Israeli reactions not always compatible with the norms of international law. It would, consequently, have been impossible to condemn the former and remain silent on the latter." (AP, www.vatican.va)

At the close of a meeting organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Istanbul from 26 to 28 July, 35 Israeli, Palestinian and international women leaders and activists [established](#) an International Women's Commission that would work to "guarantee women's full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, based upon principles of gender equality, women's human rights, international human rights and humanitarian law." (www.unifem.org)

During his visit to France, Prime Minister Sharon said at a meeting with the Jewish community in Paris, "Thanks to [the disengagement plan], Israel has gained unprecedented political achievements: a guarantee that Israel will have the right to defend it. During his visit to France, Prime Minister Sharon said at a meeting with the Jewish community in Paris, "Thanks to [the disengagement plan], Israel has gained unprecedented political achievements: a guarantee that Israel will have the right to defend itself by itself against any threat and enjoy safe and defensible borders; a guarantee that the major population centres in Judea and Samaria will remain part of Israel in any final status agreement; and that there will be no return to the 1967 borders and no entry of Palestinian refugees into Israel." (www.pmo.gov.il)

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The Israeli army said that Palestinians had opened fire at its forces in Jenin and Tulkarm, causing no injuries or damage. Also, the army had discovered a 40-kg explosive device near the "Dugit" settlement in the northern Gaza Strip. The device was detonated in a controlled manner. (www.idf.il)

Two Qassam rockets were fired at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. No injuries were reported. (The Jerusalem Post, Ynet)

Israeli forces arrested four Islamic Jihad militants in the West Bank overnight. (Ha'aretz)

An Australian woman and a Palestinian man working for UNDP were kidnapped by masked gunmen in Gaza City. Relatives of Jihad Abed, the senior Palestinian security official abducted by gunmen on 28 July, claimed responsibility. Two Palestinians were initially kidnapped, but one was released within minutes. The two UNDP contractors were released unharmed within several hours. (AFP, AP)

It was reported that Israeli Defence Minister Mofaz had thus far rejected a recommendation by senior army officials that Israel launch a major offensive in the Gaza Strip shortly before or simultaneously with the disengagement. Mr. Mofaz believed all diplomatic avenues to persuade the Palestinian Authority to act against terrorist organizations must be exhausted first, according to the report. (Ha'aretz)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was engaged in talks with Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip to buy 1,000 acres of their greenhouses for \$15 million, the farmer leading the negotiations said. USAID had confirmed that such talks were under way but said that many issues had yet to be resolved. (AP)

Three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli soldiers during a protest against the construction of the wall in Bil'in village, west of Ramallah. Witnesses said the soldiers had fired rubber-coated bullets, sound bombs and tear gas towards the protesters, including Israeli and international activists, who were sitting on the ground in protest. (IPC)

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Israeli soldiers shot and wounded a Palestinian child in the shoulder and another in the hip during an incursion into Bani Na'im village, east of Hebron, when they fired towards Palestinians protesting the incursion. (WAFa)

In Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, Israeli settlers attacked and destroyed an ambulance belonging to the PA Health Ministry and injured the medics inside. The ambulance was carrying a heart patient whose condition worsened because the attackers detained the medics and the patient for

more than three and a half hours, according to the Ministry. (*IPC, Wafa*)

The Jenin Martyrs Brigades released unharmed Jihad Abed, the senior Palestinian security official the group had abducted on 28 July. A spokesman for the group said, "He gave a full confession of crimes he committed, including murder and blackmail. ... his file and tape-recorded confession will be handed tomorrow to the Palestinian general prosecutor so that he can stand trial." (*AP, Reuters*)

Israeli soldiers suddenly opened fire at hundreds of Palestinian workers at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel who had come there after hearing local news reports that Israel had opened the crossing to allow workers to enter Israel. No injuries were reported. (*Xinhua*)

PA President Abbas met with Hamas and Islamic Jihad members in Gaza City and reached an agreement with them to ensure a smooth Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and to hold joint celebrations marking the "liberation of Palestinian lands." Khaled Al-Batsh, an Islamic Jihad official, described the talks as "very positive" and said that the two sides had discussed ways to work together after the withdrawal, but said his group remained opposed to Mr. Abbas' offer to join the PA. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Middle East Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement James Wolfensohn met with PA President Abbas and other officials in Gaza City to discuss Israel's planned disengagement. Mr. Wolfensohn suggested a plan to recycle rubble from settler homes – supposed to be destroyed following the pullout – using the material to build Palestinian homes, and said, "I believe this matter is likely to be resolved in the next days." Mr. Wolfensohn said that he and PA Civil Affairs Minister Mohammed Dahlan had discussed how to "facilitate the movements of the Palestinian people" and had made progress on the issues of the Rafah terminal and the airport. (*AFP*)

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The Israeli army said that Palestinians had fired two mortar shells at a settlement in the central Gaza Strip and one at a settlement in the "Gush Katif" block. There were no injuries or damage. Also, Palestinians opened fire at the following Israeli targets: army posts and forces in the southern Gaza Strip, an army force patrolling near the "Rafiah Yam" settlement, an army post along the border with Egypt, and an army post guarding the "Gadid" settlement. There were no injuries or damage. The army arrested four wanted Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank. (www.idf.il)

The Israeli army lifted the ban on Palestinians entering Israel from the Gaza Strip, that was imposed after the suicide bombing in Netanya on 12 July. The number of Palestinian workers allowed to enter Israel remained restricted, and a closure on the West Bank continued. (*Ha'aretz*)

Armed Israeli settlers prevented a Palestinian family in Jenin from burying a dead relative by filling the grave with sand and hitting their cars with rocks to obstruct them from entering the graveyard, according to witnesses. (*Wafa*)

Deputy Defence Minister Zeev Boim told *Israel Radio* that in case of Palestinian fire during the disengagement set to start on 17 August, Israel would suspend the pullout and a full division – thousands of soldiers – would move in "to deal a blow to the terrorists." Mr. Boim said, "I don't see a possibility that simultaneously, if we come under fire during withdrawal, that we will be able to act massively against Palestinian terror to stop the fire, and also to continue the withdrawal. ... We would stop the withdrawal, [and] we would deliver a harsh strike." He also said that the operation would be similar to "Defensive Shield," a large-scale Israeli invasion of the West Bank in 2002 in response to a wave of suicide bombings. (*AP*)

The Israeli military said it was changing riot control methods, replacing its rubber-coated steel pellets with compressed sand bullets. The sand bullet is said to be extremely painful but less dangerous because it does not penetrate the skin. In an interview with *AP*, a B'Tselem (an Israeli human rights group) spokesperson said that at least 60 Palestinians had been killed by rubber-coated steel bullets during the first intifada between 1987 and 1993 and that 15 Palestinians had been killed since the start of the second intifada in 2000. (*AP*)

During talks in Cairo between Amos Gilad, the head of the Israeli Defence Ministry's Political and International Affairs Department, and Omar Suleiman, the Egyptian intelligence service chief, an agreement was reached on the status of the "Philadelphi route" between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Under the agreement, the deployment of 750 Egyptian border guards along the route would be permitted beginning on 1 September to prevent arms smuggling. Also, the Egyptians have reportedly agreed in principle to allow the delivery of the rubble from destroyed settlers' homes into the Sinai peninsula, except for toxic and dangerous materials. (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters*)

PA Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Sha'ath said that the PLC elections originally scheduled for July would be held around 20 January 2006 and that PA President Abbas would issue a decree on 7 August setting the date. (*AFP, AP*)

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