

Division for Palestinian Rights

Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine

Monthly media monitoring review

May 2012

Monthly highlights

- Israel's military closes investigation into the 2009 killing of Palestinian civilians in an air strike during Operation Cast Lead ([1 May](#))
- Hamas officials report secret talks with five EU member States ([2 May](#))
- Israeli Supreme Court turns down appeal by Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike ([7 May](#))
- Prime Minister Netanyahu cancels early Parliamentary elections and forms unity Government with Kadima ([8 May](#))
- EU expresses deep concern about developments on the grounds which threaten to make a two-State solution impossible ([14 May](#))
- Palestinian prisoners agree to end their hunger strike ([14 May](#))
- PA President Abbas swears in a new 24-member Government ([16 May](#))
- Hamas and Fatah agree on a new timetable for a power-sharing deal that envisions elections in about six months ([20 May](#))
- Istanbul court formally presses charges against the Israeli military for the killing of nine people aboard a Turkish ship trying to break Israel's blockade of Gaza on 31 May 2010 ([28 May](#))
- The UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, on the theme of "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine", opens in Paris ([30 May](#))

I

A rocket fired from Gaza landed in an open area in Israel's Negev region, near Sderot. There were no reports of injury or damage. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Eyewitnesses reported that Israeli military vehicles levelled a 200-square-metre area and opened fire near the town of Khuza'a, in the southern Gaza Strip, trapping journalists at the scene for over an hour and setting crops ablaze. In a statement, the military said that Palestinian militants had opened fire at Israeli soldiers who had been "performing routine operational activities" near the border. The soldiers returned fire "towards suspicious locations". (*Ma'an News Agency, AFP*)

Jenin District Governor Qaddura Musa died of a heart attack shortly after armed attackers opened fire on his home. The assailants were believed to be members of the family of a Palestinian man who had been killed by Palestinian police two weeks before. (*Haaretz*)

Egypt was to close its border with Gaza for Labour Day, officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Senior Israeli jurists reportedly criticized the State for asking the High Court of Justice to rehear the petition against demolishing houses in the "Beit-El" settlement, arguing that challenging the ruling of the High Court had damaged its status and threatened the future of democracy in Israel. (*Israel Radio*)

Settlers destroyed some 100 olive trees on private Palestinian land near Bitillo, a village west of Ramallah. (*Wafa*)

The director of the sole power station of the Gaza Strip said that its full operation would depend on the arrival of required fuel, with talks under way with Egypt to allow a Qatari vessel to transport fuel into Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's Civil Administration in the West Bank ordered Palestinian villagers to uproot more than 1,000 olive trees as they had been planted in a natural reserve. (*Haaretz*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate among the labour force aged 15 years and over in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory during 2011 was 21 per cent (19 per cent males and 28 per cent females). In the West Bank, the unemployment rate was 17 per cent and 29 per cent in Gaza. At 19 per cent, women's participation in the work force was higher in the West Bank than in Gaza, where it stood at 12 per cent. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.pcbs.gov.ps)

An Israeli committee approved plans to build nine hotels in Givat Hamatos, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem close to Israel's checkpoint to Bethlehem. Khalil Tufakji, a Palestinian expert in settlement affairs, said that the plan would undermine tourism in Bethlehem with the Israeli Government hoping that tourists would stay in the hotels and then make day trips to Bethlehem rather than stay in Bethlehem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Local activists reported that the Israeli municipality of West Jerusalem handed out several notices for house demolitions in Silwan. (*Wafa*)

Israeli authorities demolished a house and 13 electric poles near Qalqilya. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Five Israeli tanks and four bulldozers raided the Al-Farahin area in the south of Gaza, razing agricultural land, local sources reported. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces demolished farm buildings near Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinians threw Molotov cocktails at an army base in the Jerusalem area. No injuries or damage were reported. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister for Prisoners Affairs, Issa Qaraqe, warned that there would be a major backlash if any of the detainees on hunger strike in Israeli jails were to die. (*AFP*)

The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, launched an appeal to international human rights institutions and international civil society bodies to apply international law and intervene urgently to impress upon Israel to respond to the humanitarian demands of the Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike. (*pakobserver.net*)

Israeli security forces clashed with some 100 Palestinians marching in solidarity with prisoners on hunger strike near the Ofer Prison. (*Ynetnews*)

Israel's military said that it had closed its investigation into the 2009 killing of at least 21 Palestinian civilians in an air strike on a house in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead, after deciding not to charge those involved. In a written response to a query by *AFP*, the Office of the Spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said that the allegations of war crimes against military personnel had proved to be unfounded, saying "The Military Advocate General found that none of the involved soldiers or officers acted in a negligent manner." A statement from B'Tselem, which had filed a complaint on the air strike on the Gaza home, said that it was "unacceptable that no one is found responsible for an action of the army that led to the killing of 21 uninvolved civilians. [...] The military's response does not detail the findings of the investigation, nor does it provide the reasons behind the decision to close the file or any new information about the circumstances". (*AFP*, *Ynetnews*)

2

Israeli forces bombed an open area in the northern Gaza Strip. No injuries were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*, *Ynetnews*)

Israeli forces arrested 11 people across the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Libyan authorities expressed regret over the decision by PA President Mahmoud Abbas to postpone his visit to Tripoli. President Abbas had been expected to arrive in Tripoli on 1 May after visiting Tunis. The spokesman of the ruling Libyan National Transitional Council said that the decision had been taken under the advice of the Palestinian Ambassador to Libya, who had expressed "security concerns". (*AFP*)

Following his official visit to Japan on 12 April, PA President Abbas met with Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba in Amman. They discussed the latest developments in the Middle East peace process, particularly Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as bilateral relations and ways to develop them. (*Wafa*)

Hamas denied a 24 April report by *Haaretz* on the results of a secret election for its political bureau and the Shura Council, the organization's political and decision-making body. Hamas sources said that Ismail Haniyeh had won by a significant margin, effectively becoming the first recognized leader of the movement in the Gaza Strip since the 2004 assassination of Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, the former political chief. Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal was expected to keep his post. However, Hamas leaders decided to transfer some of his areas of authority to the leadership in the Gaza Strip, including control of the organization's budget and of its military wing. (*Haaretz*)

According to an official, Hamas leader Mashaal and senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmed made no headway in a meeting in Cairo on the formation of a Palestinian national unity Government. (*AFP*)

A senior Hamas official said that it had been holding secret political talks with five European Union member States. Hamas officials said that France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom had been among the countries involved in the backchannel talks. Two other officials also mentioned Austria and another one added Sweden to the list. The officials said that talks had been held in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and the Gaza Strip. (*AP*)

The United States was reportedly trying to delay the establishment of a panel by the Human Rights Council to investigate the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. US Middle East envoy David Hale had met with Human Rights High Commissioner Navi Pillay in Geneva and asked her not to advance the matter in the near future. (*Haaretz*)

At its 341st meeting, the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reviewed the latest political developments and the situation on the ground. Riyadh Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, urged the Security Council to condemn Israel's illegal settlement activity.

The Committee heard a presentation by Richard Wright, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Representative Office in New York, on the operational and financial challenges faced by the Agency. The meeting was preceded by the screening of the documentary "This is My Land ... Hebron." (www.un.org)

The PA Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the Israeli decision to build thousands of housing units and a 1,100-room hotel in East Jerusalem and called upon the Quartet to take serious measures to force Israel to stop settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in order to preserve the peace process and the principle of the two-State solution. (*Wafa*)

France condemned the planned construction of a 1,100-room hotel in East Jerusalem in the settlement of "Givat Hamatos" and called upon the Israeli Government to reconsider. (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

Israeli authorities demolished a well in a village east of Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations confirmed the detection in the Gaza Strip of a new case of a novel strain of foot-and-mouth disease. (www.fao.org)

Twenty Palestinians were injured by rubber bullets during clashes with Israeli forces near the Ofer detention centre. A student demonstration had set out from Birzeit University towards Ofer to express solidarity with Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Qaraqe wrote to Pope Benedict urging him to intervene in the situation of Palestinian detainees, after doctors

warned that one hunger-striker faced immediate risk of death. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Richard Falk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said that he was appalled by the "continuing human rights violations in Israeli prisons", and urged the Government of Israel to respect its international human rights obligations.

He said that "Israel must treat those prisoners on hunger strike in accordance with international standards, including by allowing the detainees visits from their family members". (www.unog.ch)

Human Rights Watch called upon Israel to immediately charge or release prisoners jailed without charge or trial under so-called administrative detention. "It shouldn't take the self-starvation of Palestinian prisoners for Israel to realize that it is violating their due process rights," said Joe Stork, Middle East Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch. "Israel should stop holding prisoners for extended periods without charge." (www.hrw.org)

A Tunisian aid convoy arrived in the Gaza Strip, organizers said. The convoy was carrying three doctors, three lawmakers and a number of Tunisian businessmen. According to a statement, it also brought medicine and medical equipment for Gaza hospitals. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

3

Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians in Jenin and two teenagers in Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces demolished a restaurant in Beit Jala, south of Jerusalem, under the pretext that it did not have a building permit. (*Wafa*)

Israeli forces destroyed the only road connecting the village of Khirbet Yarza in the Jordan Valley to Tubas, completely isolating the village. (*Wafa*)

According to a statement from his office, PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad met with Canadian Deputy Foreign Minister Morris Rosenberg in Ramallah. Mr. Fayyad updated Mr. Rosenberg on the latest developments in the peace process, noting that the two-State solution was under threat from constant Israeli violations of international law. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a palace statement, King Abdullah II of Jordan warned that "Israel's continued policies and plans to build settlements and take unilateral measures in Palestinian territories, particularly Jerusalem, will hinder peace efforts and increase tension and instability in the region." (*Al Arabiya News*)

PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that PA President Abbas had asked Quartet Representative Tony Blair to urgently intervene with regard to Israel's treatment of Palestinian prisoners. In a statement, Mr. Erakat said that he had conveyed Mr. Abbas' message to Mr. Blair, demanding that Israel release all prisoners, particularly those jailed before 1994, and those held without charges, and that it end all restrictions on detainees' access to education and family visits. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Tel Aviv District Court authorized a compensation agreement of NIS1.2 million between the Israel Prison Service and the widow and young son of a Palestinian prisoner, Mohammed Ashkar. In the agreement, the State accepting responsibility for the events that led to Mr. Ashkar's death. The State Prosecutor's Office had closed the case against the guards involved in the 2007 incident that ended with Mr. Ashkar's death, injuries to 15 prisoners and 15 guards, as well as a burned section of the jail. (*Haaretz*)

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serri, said that he was deeply troubled by reports about the critical condition of at least two Palestinians who were being held by Israel and who had been on hunger strike for over two months. He urged the Israeli Government to preserve the health of the prisoners. (*UN News Centre*)

Two Palestinian prisoners on their 66th day of hunger strike appealed to Israel's Supreme Court for their release from detention without trial. Thaer Halahla and Bilal Diab, suspected by Israel of security offences, were among at least 1,550 Palestinian prisoners refusing food in Israeli jails in a protest against administrative detention. A spokeswoman for Physicians for Human Rights – Israel said that the two prisoners were in a "life-threatening" condition due to the length of their strike. (*Reuters*)

4

Israeli soldiers detained two Palestinian youths from the village of Marka, south of Jenin. (*IMEMC*)

PA President Abbas' advisor, Nimir Hammad said Mr. Abbas would announce a new cabinet by 8 May. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Thousands of Jordanians took to the streets demanding an end to the country's 18-year-old Wadi Araba peace treaty with Israel. (*DPA*)

5

PA forces launched a large-scale security crackdown in the Jenin district after the Governor of Jenin, Qaddura Musa, died from a heart attack that officials said had been brought upon by an attack on his home by gunmen. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas ordered the lifting of a ban on several websites critical of him. He instructed the public prosecutor and other officials to reject the closure or blocking of any website and expressed the need for the lifting of bans or any action contrary to freedom of the media. The decision followed widespread criticism of the PA leadership's recent clampdown on journalists and bloggers in the West Bank. (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post*)

Ten Palestinian prisoners participating in a mass hunger strike in Israeli jails were placed under medical supervision at a prison clinic as their conditions worsened, Israeli Prison Spokeswoman Sivan Weizeman said. Bilal Diab and Thaer Halahla, who had been on hunger strike for more than 65 days, were both in a "grave condition", Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN Mansour said. In a letter to the Security Council on 4 May, Ambassador Mansour said that the lives of several prisoners, who had been on hunger strike for between 59 and 67 days were at risk. (*The Washington Post, AFP*)

6

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians in Jericho and in the Hebron district. In Jericho, soldiers discovered five pipe bombs and gunpowder in a house. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli border patrol officers arrested a 17-year-old Palestinian at the Tapuah Junction carrying three pipe bombs. The teenager was transferred to the Shin Bet for interrogation. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel's Minister of Defense Ehud Barak and Army Chief Benny Gantz agreed to destroy the West Bank homes of Hakim and Ajmad Awad for killing an Israeli family in a settlement in March 2011. The move, which had been recommended by the Shin Bet, would be subject to legal scrutiny in the following weeks by Israeli parliamentary legal advisers. Tamar Feldman, a lawyer with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, said, "Demolishing the houses of families of convicted criminals, despicable as their crimes may be, is collective punishment, which is absolutely banned under international law." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's High Court justices sharply criticized the Government for not fulfilling its legal commitment to demolish a West Bank settlement. During a hearing regarding the State's request to reconsider the demolition of illegally-built structures in the "Ulpna" neighbourhood, which was part of the "Beit El" settlement, Justice Uzi Fogelman said that "when the State claims it will do something, we do not imagine that it will not be done. There is respect between the branches." (*Haaretz*)

A group of settlers entered several homes in Hebron along Shuhada Street. Jamila Hassan Abdul Fattah Al-Shalaldeh, a Palestinian woman, who was accused of attacking the settlers after they had entered her home, was detained by Israeli forces. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces demolished a well and uprooted three old olive trees near the town of Bani Na'im, east of Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Israeli authorities ordered Palestinians in Beit Sorik, a village north-west of Jerusalem, to halt construction work on one of the village's agricultural

roads, confiscating a road roller compactor. The road had been used for hundreds of years by farmers to reach their agricultural lands, which formed the only source of livelihood, located on top of mountains and in steep valleys. (Wafa)

The Arab League's General Secretariat held an emergency meeting in Cairo to discuss the situation of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons. Gamal Al Ghoneim, the Permanent delegate of Kuwait and President of the current session, called for an international intervention to highlight the plight of Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails. The meeting was expected to result in the submission of a request to the General Assembly to hold an extraordinary session on the issue of Palestinian prisoners kept in Israeli prisons, and an international commission sent to probe conditions in Israeli jails. (Bahrain News Agency, Wafa)

The Haifa District Court announced that it would hand down a verdict in August in a civil suit filed by the family of Rachel Corrie, the American pro-Palestinian activist who was killed in the Gaza Strip. Ms. Corrie, who was from Olympia, Washington, United States, died in Rafah on 16 March 2003 when a bulldozer struck her during a protest by the International Solidarity Movement, a pro-Palestinian group. (The Jerusalem Post)

UNRWA staff in Jordan started an open-ended strike, shutting down basic services for Jordan's 1.5 million Palestinian refugees. Nearly all of the 7,500 UNRWA employees responded to a call by their representative councils to hold a work stoppage to protest the "reluctance" of UNRWA to meet their demands, which included a \$140 salary pay raise. The employees were also demanding promotions for teachers, directors and supervisors, filling of vacancies in all the Agency's sectors and improvement of work conditions. The strike had cumulative effects on all of Jordan's Palestinian refugees, who depended on UNRWA for their livelihood, according to the Agency. (AFP, Zawya)

7

The commander of the Israeli Prison Service's elite "Masada" unit revealed during his testimony in the trial of Knesset member Mohammed Barakeh that undercover Israeli soldiers had hurled stones in the "general direction" of IDF soldiers as part of their activity to counter weekly demonstrations in the Palestinian village of Bil'in. Mr. Barakeh had been charged with assaulting a border guard in Bil'in who had been attempting to arrest a demonstrator. The unit's commander for the operation that day, "fighter 101", said that the undercover force's mission had been to provide intelligence and carry out "quality" arrests, if needed. (Haaretz)

According to the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, a 19-year-old member died during training in the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called an early general election for 4 September. According to opinion polls, Mr. Netanyahu is likely to win the polls as Israel confronts Iran's nuclear ambitions. "My intention is to form as wide a coalition as possible in order to bring about stability and lead Israel in the face of the great challenges still ahead of us," Mr. Netanyahu told his Cabinet in public remarks. (Reuters)

After reports that the Vegetable Growers' Association in Israel would consider buying tomatoes from the Gaza Strip in response to a sudden price hike in Israeli tomatoes, Ibrahim al-Qudra, the PA Deputy Agricultural Minister, said that Israel must lift its blockade on Gaza and stop limiting exports to the needs of the Israeli market. (Ma'an News Agency)

Right-wing politicians called on Prime Minister Netanyahu to support Knesset legislation that could prevent the court-ordered demolition of five stone structures in the "Ulpana" neighbourhood, which housed 30 families. "The State has a moral responsibility toward the residents that it encouraged and sent to live there," said Culture and Sports Minister Limor Livnat (Likud). (The Jerusalem Post)

A Palestinian family received an Israeli court eviction order from their house in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem so that it could be handed over to settlers. The order was issued to Fatima Salamieh, who had been living in the house since the 1950s. Israeli groups claimed the house and the entire area where the house was located as owned by Jews and that they were claiming it back. Several Palestinian families had recently lost their homes in the same neighbourhood and under the same pretext. (Wafa)

The Israeli Supreme Court turned down an appeal for the release of Palestinian prisoners Diab and Halahla, who had been on hunger strike for 69 days to protest their incarceration without formal charges. However, in its decision released by the Justice Ministry, the Court said that security authorities should consider freeing them for medical reasons. The decision sharpened concern for the prisoners' lives and raised the spectre of widespread unrest in the event of a death. (The New York Times, AFP, Reuters, Ma'an News Agency)

The Arab League decided to call on the General Assembly to hold a special session to discuss the issue of Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails. (Wafa)

Fatah official Nabil Sha'ath called upon the EU to react decisively to the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners. Speaking with a delegation from the British Labour Party, Mr. Sha'ath stressed that practical steps by the international community were vital in order to force Israel to respond. (Ma'an News Agency)

Protesters on hunger strike in Gaza City called on the international community to support Palestinians jailed in Israeli detention facilities who were demanding their rights. (Ma'an News Agency)

Prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails needed the support of a united national leadership, Palestinian Legislative Council member Mohammad Dahlan said. (Ma'an News Agency)

8

Palestinian sources reported that Israeli troops stormed the West bank cities of Ramallah, Tubas, Qalqilya, Salfit and Bethlehem and arrested 12 Palestinians. (Petra)

PA President Abbas said that he was ready to engage with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on a peace agreement if he proposed "anything promising or positive". However, in the absence of anything positive, he would be ready to renew the push for international recognition of statehood at the UN. (Reuters)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that the Palestinians may have "lost the argument" on the international stage and cautioned that continued Israeli occupation was unsustainable. "The Israelis have managed to successfully trivialize our side of the argument," he said. Mr. Fayyad also called for elections, warning that his Administration's future was clouded by severe financial strains. He said that the Palestinians had failed to galvanize a distracted world behind their cause. (Reuters)

In a surprise turnabout, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu decided to cancel the early Parliamentary elections he had called the day before and instead formed a unity Government with the opposition Kadima party. Mr. Netanyahu said that his new coalition Government would promote a "responsible" peace process with the Palestinians. (The New York Times, AP)

The decision by Kadima Chairman Shaul Mofaz to join Prime Minister Netanyahu's Government caught many in the PA by surprise but did not raise hope that the political change would lead to a resumption of peace. In contrast, Hamas stated that the new Israeli coalition Government was "the most dangerous for Palestinians", claiming that Mr. Mofaz believed in killing civilians, including women and children. (Ynetnews, The Jerusalem Post, Wafa)

Senior PLO official Saeb Erakat was in a Ramallah hospital after suffering a mild heart attack. Mr. Erakat underwent catheterization surgery and was in stable condition at the Ramallah medical compound. (Ma'an News Agency)

French President-elect Francois Hollande pledged full support for the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. (Petra)

PA President Abbas told members of the Jewish organization Kabbalah that the PA was committed to a serious peace process based on international resolutions, which would establish a Palestinian State within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (Wafa)

The EU approved funding for projects in support of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission and would provide €674,370 to boost the Commission's capacities, strengthen its civic engagement in the West Bank and Gaza, enhance its human resource base, help to establish links with civil society groups and raise public awareness, and pay for the refurbishing of the Commission's regional office in Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli soldiers invaded the offices of Stop The Wall, a Ramallah-based grass-roots organization that campaigns against the separation wall, and confiscated all their files and computers. (Ma'an News Agency, IMEMC)

According to the Land Research Centre, a Jerusalem-based research group, bulldozers, escorted by Israeli forces, demolished stone terraces and uprooted some 100 olive trees on 13,000 square metres of land belonging to Hasan Muhammad Abdul-Ghani Al-Amlah, in the Attous area of Beit Ula village. According to the Centre, Israeli authorities had designated Mr. Al-Amlah's land as Israeli State property and had ordered him to vacate the area. A court hearing had been scheduled for 7 May but the land was razed before it could take place. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli Supreme Court ordered the eviction of Ghazi Zalloum and Ismail Wazwaz from their properties in the neighbourhood of Alqurma, in the Old City of Jerusalem, in favour of Israeli settlers. The court claimed that both properties had belonged to Jews before 1948, the year Israel was created. Implementation of the eviction order could occur at any moment. (IMEMC)

An Israeli court agreed to release on a \$5,000 bail Riyad Shtewi, a local Palestinian activist, who had been arrested for his participation in a non-violent weekly demonstration in Kufr Qaddum, a village east of Qalqilya. (Wafa)

The PA Cabinet called on the international community to immediately intervene on behalf of prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails. In a statement, Cabinet ministers said that they held Israel "fully responsible" for the safety of the hundreds of prisoners who had been on hunger strike for over two months. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas warned that the death of any one of the hundreds of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike would be a "disaster" and could trigger a backlash that might slip out of control. (Reuters, Ynetnews)

In a message to Fatah's committee in Gaza, former prisoners said that Israeli prison doctors had been subjecting detainees on hunger strike to "slow death", due to their medical negligence. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian prisoner Halahla, who had been on hunger strike for the past 71 days, and whose request to be freed had been turned down by Israel's Supreme Court the previous day, was transferred to an Israeli hospital. (www.bbc.co.uk)

According to a statement issued by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the non-governmental organization had established a situation room for the mass hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners which would work around the clock to gather and distribute any relevant information and to enable a public campaign for supporting the demands by the prisoners to respect their human rights. (Wafa)

The International Committee of the Red Cross called upon Israel to transfer six Palestinians who had been on hunger strike for weeks to a hospital and allow visits from their families. All six prisoners were administrative detainees. (www.icrc.org)

The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah expressed concern about the deteriorating health condition of Palestinian prisoners who had been on hunger strike for over two months and requested the Government of Israel to make available all necessary medical assistance and to allow family visits as a matter of urgency. (www.eeas.europa.eu)

School students and civil servants suspended work to take part in a public sit-in to support Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Palestinian Universities' Employees' Union Council said that they would suspend work in order to hold a sit-in outside the Palestinian Legislative Council Headquarters in protest to the Government's negligence towards higher education, a representative said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A new exhibition that opened in the Deutsches Architektur Zentrum in Berlin showcased the need for innovative community participation in urban planning to improve conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East. (Wafa)

Gaza journalist Asma al-Ghoul won an international award for courage in journalism, the International Women's Media Foundation said. Ms. Al-Ghoul was awarded the Foundation's 2012 prize, alongside female journalists Reeyot Alemu from Ethiopia, Khadija Ismayilova from Azerbaijan and Zubeida Mustafa from Pakistan. (Ma'an News Agency)

9

Israeli forces detained four teenagers after ransacking their homes near Qalqilya in the northern West Bank. They also arrested five Palestinians from Hebron and Jenin. (Ma'an News Agency, Petra)

A Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip exploded in an agricultural field in Israel's Negev region. There were no reports of injuries or damage. (Ynetnews)

Israeli naval forces detained two Palestinian fishermen off the northern Gaza coast. An Israeli military spokesman said that a fishing boat had deviated from the permitted fishing area designated by Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces arrested 17 Palestinians in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

In a telephone conversation, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that the US hoped that an expanded coalition would enable Israel to take steps to advance peace talks with the Palestinians. (Haaretz)

Addressing a ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Undersecretary of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry for Multilateral Relations, Prince Turki bin Muhammad, reiterated his country's support for the Palestinian issue. He urged all member countries of the Movement to recognize Palestine, which had already been recognized by 132 countries as an independent State. (arabnews.com)

A high-profile Fatah delegation from the West Bank was scheduled to visit the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian Airlines renewed operations seven years after grounding its planes, with an inaugural flight from the Egyptian town of Arish to Amman. This was facilitated by an agreement reached between the PA Transportation Ministry and the Egyptian and Jordanian authorities. The company was founded in 1995 and had operated shuttles between the Dahania Airport in Rafah and various destinations in the Middle East and North Africa. The company was forced to shut down after the IDF bombed Dahania in 2001. The airline's Director-General, Zeyad Albad, said that the company would operate a weekly flight between Amman's Marka International Airport and Arish. The route would simplify travel for Gaza residents, who had been forced to travel over 400 kilometres to the nearest international airport in Cairo. (Ynetnews)

The Office of the European Union Representativesaid the EU planned to contribute €22.5 million to help the Palestinian Authority pay the April salaries and pensions of around 84,500 Palestinian public service providers and pensioners. (www.eeas.europa.eu)

The World Bank contributed \$3 million to the PA Ministry of National Economy for the provision of business development services. (Wafa)

Israeli authorities demolished a house under construction in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli settlers set fire to hundreds of trees in Nablus in the northern West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that the "Ulpana" neighbourhood in the West Bank settlement of "Beit El" was not an illegal outpost and that the State, rather than the neighbourhood's residents, had made a mistake. Mr. Liberman said that he saw no other way solve the issue than through legislation." (*Haaretz*)

Israeli army bulldozers demolished three buildings in the West Bank village of Housan, west of Bethlehem. (*Wafa*)

A group of protesters blocked the entrance to the UN office in Ramallah, criticising the UN for not intervening to save prisoners on hunger strike. (*Ma'an News Agency, IMEMC*)

A Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the Secretary-General continued to follow with concern the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody, in particular those held in what is known as administrative detention. Mr. Ban stressed the importance of averting any further deterioration in their condition and reiterated that those detained must be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees or released without delay." (*UN News Centre*)

According to a spokesperson, the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs was extremely concerned by the rapidly deteriorating health of several Palestinian prisoners who had gone on hunger strike in Israel. For humanitarian reasons, it urged the Israeli authorities to be sensitive to the risk of a tragic outcome and to take appropriate action as a matter of urgency. It also underscored that administrative detention should remain an exception, be of limited duration and be used in compliance with fundamental guarantees, notably the rights of defence of the detainee and the right to a fair trial within a reasonable period of time. (*Wafa, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr*)

Turkish prosecutors completed their investigation into the 2010 raid on the *Mavi Marmara* passenger ship by Israeli commandos, who killed nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists attempting to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The media quoted Turkish Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin as saying that, once the Justice Ministry had received the names of the soldiers involved in the raid from the Foreign Ministry, the indictments would be sent to the concerned courts. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Jordanian Government said that local UNRWA staff had agreed to suspend an open-ended strike for better pay after reaching a deal with management. But a spokesman for the employees insisted that the strike was still on. (*AFP*)

A humanitarian aid convoy, "The Right to Return", headed by British MP George Galloway, entered Syrian territory on its way to the Gaza Strip.

The spokesman for the convoy members said that the convoy was scheduled to arrive in Gaza on 15 May. (*SANA*)

10

Israel Army Radio reported that the PA had requested to take part as a State in the United Nations Sustainable Development Conference (Rio+20), scheduled to take place in Brazil in June. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that the estimated population of Palestinians in the world at the end of 2011 was 11.2 million. (*www.pcbs.gov.ps*)

Settlers prevented Palestinian farmers in the town of Tekoa East, south of Bethlehem, from accessing their agricultural land for cultivation. (*IMEMC*)

The Prisoners' Society said that Mahmoud Issa, who had been in isolation for 13 years, and Waleed Ali, were moved out of their cells by Israeli prison authorities. The head of the Prisoners Society, Qadura Fares, said that 16 prisoners were being held in solitary confinement. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Speaking with the families of prisoners at a sit-in tent in Al-Bireh, PA President Abbas said that the Palestinian leadership would spare no effort to liberate Palestinian prisoners. He said that even if every other issue in the peace process was to be resolved, Palestinians would not sign an agreement until every prisoner had been released from Israeli jails. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Families of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike shut down the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Ramallah, briefly blocked employees from entering the building and called upon the Red Cross to take responsibility by exposing Israeli violations of prisoners' rights. Red Cross spokeswoman Nadia Debsi said that the organization called the Israeli prison administration on a daily basis to transfer the striking prisoners to a hospital where they could receive appropriate medical care. (*Wafa*)

An official from the Palestinian prisoners' rights group Addameer said that negotiations between leaders of the hunger strike and the Israel Prison Service appeared to be making progress and that there could be a positive response in the following few days. The Prison Service appeared to have agreed to allow family visits from Gaza and to revoke a range of restrictions, including a ban on education. In addition, an agreement to move all prisoners in solitary confinement was also being negotiated. Israel Prison Service spokeswoman Sivan Weizman confirmed the meeting. (*Ahram Online*)

The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued the following statement: "Today, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Roberterry met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah and discussed issues of shared interest, including the need for meaningful peace talks, the internal Palestinian situation and particularly the situation on the ground. In this context, there was a focus on the issue of Palestinian prisoners. The Special Coordinator reiterated the concern of the United Nations, as expressed by the Secretary-General yesterday. President Abbas and Mr. Serry both agreed on the urgency of resolving this issue immediately. President Abbas expressed his appreciation for the United Nations contribution in this regard." (*www.unsco.org*)

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Filippo Grandi expressed his grave concern about the current medical and health conditions of the thousands of Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli prisons. Mr. Grandi appealed to the Israeli Government to find an acceptable solution, noting that the hunger strikers' demands were generally related to the basic rights of prisoners, as stipulated in the Geneva Conventions. (*www.unrwa.org*)

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate said that Palestinian journalists who had met with Israeli journalists would be expelled. The warning followed a meeting the previous week between Israeli and Palestinian journalists on the occasion of World Free Press Day. Similar meetings had also taken place over the previous few months in European capitals. "We are opposed to such meetings because they are designed to achieve normalization with Israel," said a member of the Syndicate in Ramallah. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

11

Palestinians fired a Qassam rocket from the Gaza Strip that landed in the Ashkelon Coast Regional Council. No damage or injuries were reported. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Senior Israeli ministers failed to decide on the fate of five buildings in the "Ulpana" outpost of the "Beit El" settlement near Ramallah, which the High Court had ordered to be demolished by 1 July. The office of Prime Minister Netanyahu, who had called the meeting, said that the ministers

would hold further talks. (DPA)

Knesset members announced their intention to introduce bills to retroactively authorize structures located in "Ulpana", which they believed had majority support. (The Jerusalem Post)

The people of Battir, a Palestinian farming village that still used irrigation systems from Roman times, said that their way of life was in danger due to a planned wall construction by Israel. Giovanni Fontana-Antonelli, a local UNESCO official, said that the wall would interfere with the ancient irrigation system of the village, which UNESCO in 2011 awarded with a \$15,000 prize for "Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes".

Israeli Defense officials said that they planned to begin construction in the following weeks. Battir's lawyer, Ghiath Nasser, said that the village would seek a court order to block the construction. (AP)

In a statement, the World Health Organization (WHO) called upon Israel to take immediate measures to protect the health of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike, respect their fundamental rights, provide adequate medical care to prisoners in ill health, transfer prisoners requiring treatment to a hospital, enable family visits and not to provide medical treatment without the consent of prisoners. (Ma'an News Agency)

UNRWA was to launch a new programme to upgrade the dilapidated facilities of the Dheisheh refugee camp located south of Bethlehem. For decades, UNRWA and other agencies had provided essential services in the camp without implementing permanent improvements. However, the Agency said that the time had come to do more for the growing population of refugees. "Improving the daily life of refugees doesn't jeopardize their right to return back home," said Sandi Hilal, director of the camp improvement programme. (Ynetnews)

12

"I don't see how Israel's unity Government will be translated into rapprochement with the Palestinians vis-à-vis the peace process," PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said. Mr. Malki also said that a new bid for statehood at the General Assembly was "imminent". "It depends on the response of Netanyahu to our letter. It depends on how the Americans will react to that and if they come forward with some fresh ideas," Mr. Malki said. "We are not in a rush, but at the same time, we are not going to wait forever." (AP)

In a letter sent to PA President Abbas, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that the national unity Government of Israel had created a new opportunity to move the peace process ahead, adding that he wanted to restart negotiations as soon as possible. The letter was delivered by his special envoy, Isaac Molho, who met with Mr. Abbas for 90 minutes. Following the meeting, a joint statement was issued, which stated: "Israel and the Palestinian Authority are committed to achieving peace and the sides hope that the exchange of letters between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu will further this goal". A source who saw the letter said that it included an official pledge to establish a demilitarized Palestinian State in keeping with the principle of a two-State solution. (Haaretz, www.pmo.gov.il)

13

Palestinian security forces detained Zakariya Zubeidi, a prominent ex-militant, stepping up a campaign of arrests after Governor of Jenin Musa died of a heart attack following a shootout, residents said. (AP)

A teenage boy was injured and another arrested in Hebron as locals clashed with Israeli soldiers, medics said. (Ma'an News Agency)

President Abbas met with the PLO Executive Committee and the Fatah Central Committee. The PLO Executive Committee released a statement in which it said that Mr. Netanyahu's letter did not contain clear answers to such essential issues as a halt to construction in the settlements, recognition of the 1967 borders and the release of prisoners. A member of the Fatah Central Committee, Mohammed Shtayyeh, said that Mr. Netanyahu's letter contained no new proposals or ideas. The Palestinian leadership would decide its next moves after consulting with Arab countries and the PA's friends worldwide, Mr. Abbas said. (Haaretz)

Prime Minister Netanyahu ordered the evacuation of a Hebron home taken by settlers the previous month after being warned by the Attorney-General that the expropriation of Palestinian homes and lands could lead to Israeli officials being indicted by the International Criminal Court. (Haaretz)

After opposition from Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Israeli Government struck down a bill proposed by a Likud lawmaker to extend Israeli law to settlements, which could have been tantamount to a *de facto* annexation of large swaths of Area C. (The Jerusalem Post)

Israeli settlers chopped down olive trees belonging to a Palestinian family south of Hebron, a local committee spokesman said. (Ma'an News Agency)

A local farmer was attacked by a settler while tending to his land in Beit Ummar, a local official said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Environment Minister Gilad Erdan said that Israel should consider cutting its supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip in the summer if it found itself experiencing power shortages, adding that: "It would be absurd for Israelis to be the first ones affected while at the same time we continue to provide electricity to Gaza, which they are not paying." (AFP)

14

The Israeli army and other security services beefed up forces and riot gear along the northern border and in the West Bank, as Palestinians and supporters prepared to mark Nakba Day. The army and police set up a sound projector that causes disorientation and nausea and a putrid, nausea-inducing spray. (Xinhua)

Fatah official Abbas Zaki said that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's letter to President Abbas on the peace process outlined long-term solutions that would take 20 years to implement and that he warned would allow Israel time to take over all Palestinian lands. (Voice of Palestine Radio)

The EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted its conclusions on the Middle East peace process. In the Conclusions, the Council welcomed the exchange of letters between the parties and urged both sides to build on the current contacts, including the joint statement issued thereafter. The Council reaffirmed the commitment to implement EU legislation and the bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products, adding that: "The EU expresses deep concern about developments on the grounds which threaten to make a two-State solution impossible." The EU called for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem and unimpeded social and economic developments in Area C, and called upon Israel to allow more access and control of the Area for the PA. The EU expected its development projects in Area C to be protected. (www.consilium.europa.eu)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu decided, upon President Abbas' request, to return to the PA the bodies of 100 Palestinian militants who had been buried in Israel. (Haaretz)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak said that the West Bank settlements of "Ofra" and "Beit El" would be annexed to Israel under a final-status agreement, a change from the position he had adopted at the 2000 Camp David talks when he was Prime Minister. He said, however, that he was opposed to a law that would expropriate private Palestinian land and retroactively legalize areas like the "Ulpana" outpost in "Beit El." (Haaretz)

A local council leader said that Israeli settlers damaged agricultural fields near the Bethlehem-area village of Wadi Fukin. (Ma'an News Agency)

An appeal by the Popular Struggle Coordinating Committee, the Palestinian BDS National Committee and the Israeli non-governmental organization Gush Shalom called for a global 24-hour hunger strike in solidarity with striking Palestinian prisoners on 17 May. The strike was expected to be carried out in front of Israeli embassies, consulates and UN offices around the world. (Wafa)

Palestinian prisoners agreed to end their hunger strike, officials on both sides confirmed. According to the terms of the deal, Israel agreed to allow some 400 prisoners from Gaza to receive family visits for the first time since 2006 and roughly 20 prisoners had been released from solitary

confinement. Israel also agreed to improve other conditions of detention and to free so-called administrative detainees once they completed their terms, unless they were brought to court. PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs Qaraqe said that there was an understanding that the terms of the roughly 300 prisoners currently held without charge would not be extended. *(AFP, AP, Reuters, The New York Times)*

Quartet Representative Tony Blair welcomed the agreement between the Israeli Prison Service and Palestinian prisoners, that had enabled the prisoners to end their hunger strike. Mr. Blair had expressed concern over the deteriorating health of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike and said that over the previous week, he had "engaged Israeli official at all levels to take all necessary measures to prevent a tragic outcome that could have serious implications for stability and security conditions on the ground". *(Ma'an News Agency, WAFA)*

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Maxwell Gaylard said that prisoner representatives and civil society organizations had been "absolutely steadfast" in highlighting the plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The Almogor Terrorist Victims, an Israeli association, criticized the Israeli Government for signing a deal with Palestinian prisoners that would improve conditions in the prisons. *(The Jerusalem Post)*

Israel allowed the export of Gaza-made garments to foreign markets for the first time since Israel imposed a tight blockade on the Gaza Strip in June 2006, a Palestinian official said. *(Xinhua)*

A Palestinian elementary school in Area C was shut down after Israel's Civil Administration confiscated a vehicle used to transport teachers to the school. The Administration also issued a demolition order against another school in the Jinba cave village, leaving residents without access to any other school. An access road, tents, mud huts and solar energy facilities were also ordered razed, and demolition orders that had been frozen by agreement with the State prosecution in 2007 were reinstated. In 1999, the area had been declared a live-fire exercise zone by the IDF. *(Haaretz)*

A report by the Displacement Working Group, chaired by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that Israel had razed 62 European-funded structures in the West Bank in 2011 and that another 110 such projects were at risk. The Working Group said that the affected structures had been financed by France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the European Commission. OCHA said that a total of 620 structures in the West Bank had been torn down in 2011, mostly in Area C. *(www.eubusiness.com)*

15

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed in southern Israel. No injuries or damages were reported. *(The Jerusalem Post)*

An undercover Israeli force attacked and arrested a Palestinian man from the town of Issawiya, in Jerusalem. In another incident, Israeli soldiers beat a young man in Beit Ummar, near Hebron, during demonstrations commemorating the 64th anniversary of the Al-Nakba. *(IMEMC)* Twenty-five unconscious Palestinians were brought to a hospital after Israeli forces fired tear gas towards farmers and houses near Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. An Israeli military spokesperson said that riot dispersal devices had been placed adjacent to the Erez crossing and then detonated. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israeli soldiers detained a 17-year-old Palestinian in Beit Ummar, near Hebron, after kicking and punching him. *(IMEMC)*

Hamas urged Fatah and the PA to reject negotiations with Israel. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Roberterry welcomed the agreement reached to end the hunger strike of Palestinian prisoners. He thanked the Egyptian authorities for the important role they had played and urged all involved to implement the agreement in good faith and promptly. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan bestowed the Chief of the Representative Office of Japan to the PA, Naofumi Hashimoto, the new title of Ambassador-in-Charge of Palestinian Affairs. The title would not carry plenipotentiary representative powers but would enable Mr. Hashimoto to engage in diplomatic activities. *(The Japan Times)*

Protests on the occasion of Nakba Day were held across the Occupied Palestinian Territory with the main rally staged in Ramallah and demonstrations at the nearby Ofer military prison and Qalandiya checkpoint. Minor clashes were reported. *(Al-Jazeera)*

Israeli Defense Minister Barak told *Israel Radio* that there would only be one State between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, the State of Israel. He also said that the settlements of "Beit El", "Ofer" and "Baal-Hazor" must be annexed to Israel. That issue needed to be reflected on any map that the Palestinians proposed for any future agreement. *(Palestine News Network)*

IDF troops, border guards and police forces returned to the "Ramat Migron" outpost and demolished a stone structure. Two occupants of the unauthorized outpost were detained during the demolition. The adjacent "Oz Zion" outpost was also razed. Settlers claimed that five women were arrested during clashes that erupted at the scene. *(Ynetnews)*

The Israeli Knesset's Finance Committee approved the allocation of NIS 44 million (about \$12 million) for West Bank settlements. *(Ynetnews)*

The Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank approved a \$6.5 million education-to-work transition grant, aimed at increasing the employment prospects of Palestinian students who graduate from higher education institutions. The project would facilitate the transition of young Palestinian men and women from educational institutions to the workforce by fostering partnerships between tertiary institutions and employers. *(www.worldbank.org)*

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics said that the current account deficit in the Palestinian territory had increased to \$1.894 billion, the highest since 2000. It also said that the Palestinian Authority's budget deficit for 2011 had increased compared with 2010, reaching \$1.278 billion. *(WAFA, www.pcb.gov.ps)*

16

A 14-year-old Palestinian boy was injured when a tear gas canister fired by Israeli soldiers hit him in the face during clashes at the entrance to the Arroub refugee camp, north of Hebron. He was transferred to a hospital in Hebron. Several other Palestinians were treated for tear gas inhalation. *(WAFA)*

PA President Abbas swore in a new 24-member Government headed by Prime Minister Fayyad. In addition to Mr. Fayyad, the new Cabinet would include nine new ministers and consist of the following ministers: Nabil Qassis, Finance; Riad Malki, Foreign Affairs; Said Abu Ali, Interior; Yousef Abu Safieh, Environment; Ahmad Majdalani, Labour; Khaled Qawasm, Local Government; Lamis Alami, Education; Mahmoud Habbash, Islamic Affairs and Waqf; Siham Barghouti, Culture; Ali Jarbawi, Higher Education; Majida Masri, Social Affairs; Maher Ghneim, Works and Housing; Rabiha Diab, Women's Affairs; Issa Qaraqe, Prisoners' Affairs; Jawad Naji, Economy; Rola Ma'aia, Tourism; Safa Nasser Eddin, Telecommunications; Ali Abu Zuhri, Transportation; Adnan Hussein, Jerusalem Affairs; Ali Muhanna, Justice; Mahmoud Abu Ramadan, State Minister for Planning; Hani Abdeen, Health; and Walid Assaf, Agriculture. *(WAFA)*

The results of the Labour Force Survey for the first quarter of 2012, unveiled by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, indicated that the

unemployment rate in the Palestinian territory had reached 23.9 per cent, bringing the total number of the unemployed to about 261,000, with 147,000 in the West Bank and 114,000 in the Gaza Strip. The gap in the labour force participation rate between males and females was wide: 68.9 per cent for males compared with 17.3 per cent for females. (www.pcbs.gov.ps)

Israeli policies had stifled the job market and the economical development of East Jerusalem, according to a report and a short film released by the Association for Civil Right in Israel, ahead of "Jerusalem Day". The film outlined the harmful policies and neglect, that had led to an unprecedented deterioration in the state of 360,882 Palestinians in East Jerusalem, 78 per cent of whom live below the poverty line. (www.acri.org.il)

Israeli police had established a new task force ahead of a number of demolitions of West Bank settlements and outposts that were due to take place by the end of the year. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli soldiers handed notices to a number of shop owners in the town of Arraba, near Jenin, for the demolitions of their shops under the pretext that the structures had been built without permits. (*Wafa*)

In a news release issued at the end of her three-day visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Catherine Bragg voiced deep concern over the plight of Palestinians affected by the Israeli occupation, including those displaced after their homes had been demolished. She called for the scrapping of policies and practices that denied the Palestinians the right to support themselves. (*UN News Centre*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held its 342nd meeting in New York. During the meeting, Mohammad Shtayyeh, member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks and Minister-in-charge of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction, briefed the Committee on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and developments in the political process. Mr. Shtayyeh said that the lack of confidence-building measures on the ground, as well as the absence of a time frame in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, made the possibility of a two-State solution "slimmer every day", as 2012 was on track to become a year of "political vacuum". (*Press release GA/PAL/1230*)

17

Seven Palestinian farmers were injured, two of them seriously, when Israeli forces fired artillery rounds at Beit Lahia east of Gaza City, Gaza medical spokesman Adham Abu Salmiya said. An Israeli army spokeswoman said that forces had opened fire towards "several suspects approaching the security fence" near the Karni crossing, adding that no hits had been identified. In another incident, witnesses said that Israeli bulldozers had entered the Gaza Strip, east of Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza. The IDF said that it had only been a routine incursion a few metres into the Gaza Strip, refuting Palestinian reports that live artillery had been fired near Beit Lahia. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli soldiers escorted about 1,500 Jewish worshippers to Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus. Clashes broke out as locals threw stones and soldiers fired tear gas. Jews believe that the tomb was the final resting place of the biblical figure Joseph. Muslims believe that an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Yussef (Joseph) Dawiqat, was buried there. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

Three Palestinian men were shot in the Jerusalem area town of a-Ram and brought to the Hizme checkpoint. One of the men was pronounced dead after Magen David Adom teams tried to revive him without success. The other two men who had sustained mild to moderate wounds were taken to the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus. (*The Jerusalem Post, Arutz Sheva*)

An 18-year-old Palestinian man died after suffocating in a smuggling tunnel beneath the border of the Gaza Strip and Egypt, medics said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The PA briefed Jordan on the latest developments related to the peace process, including the letters exchanged between the Palestinians and the Israelis and the options that the Palestinians had for the future. During a meeting with PA President Abbas, Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh reiterated Jordan's commitment to making all efforts to help establish an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders. (*The Jordan Times*)

PA President Abbas issued an executive order amending the 2005 election law as a precursor to holding a municipal vote sooner than scheduled. The Minister of Local Governance, Khaled Qawasmi, said that the decree would help the new Government take a decision to hold elections as soon as possible. He added that the law would allow holding an election in more than one stage in case more than a day was needed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Heritage Museum at Dar al-Tifel al-Arabi, in East Jerusalem, reopened in ceremonies attended by PA Prime Minister Fayyad and the Assessor for Cooperation at the Italian Province of Pisa, Silvia Pagnin, as representative of the Italian partners of the project, Istituzione Centro Nord-Sud. (*Wafa*)

Guards at the Al-Aqsa Mosque said that a group of Jewish settlers, led by an Israeli Minister, entered the Mosque and took a tour of the grounds under the protection of Israeli special forces. Israeli police had approved organized groups of settlers to march on Sunday 20 May, in what they called the "Flags March". Sunday would be the anniversary of the occupation of the eastern part of Jerusalem known in Israel as "Jerusalem Day". (*Palestine News Network*)

A group of settlers from the settlement of "Yizhar" set fire to a car in Nablus, PA settlement affairs official Ghassan Daghlis said. He also said that settlers had thrown rocks at Palestinian cars driving near the settlement. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested Khayri Ata Musa, the Director of the Jenin-based *Al-Asir* (the prisoner) satellite channel, after raiding his home and confiscating broadcasting equipment. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Palestinian prisoners, Mahmoud Sarsak and Akram Rikhawi, continued to refuse food despite the agreement to end a mass prisoner hunger strike, Israeli and Palestinian officials said. (www.newlebanon.com)

The Israel Prison Service brought 18 prisoners, held in solitary confinement for years, out of isolation and placed them in cells with other Palestinian prisoners. (*Wafa*)

The Jerusalem Rabbinical Court awarded legal and administrative custody over Joseph's Tomb in Nablus to two rabbis who had been involved in organizing visits to the site without the Israeli army's permission. Nablus was under full PA control as provided by the Oslo accords. (*Haaretz*)

The "Ansar 2" and the "Miles of Smiles 12" solidarity convoys managed to enter the Gaza Strip via the Rafah border crossing on the Gaza Egypt border. The "Ansar 2" convoy, coordinated by British Member of Parliament George Galloway, included 90 participants from 10 different countries and carried medications urgently needed in Gaza, mainly related to heart conditions, cancer and paediatric medications. The "Miles of Smiles" European convoy carried 23 participants, two trucks and 12 caravans loaded with medications and humanitarian aid. (*IMEMC*)

18

PA President Abbas was to visit Egypt and other Arab countries to brief their leaders on Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's response to a letter he

had sent him the previous month. PA officials in Ramallah had described the response as “vague”, adding that Mr. Netanyahu had not provided clear answers on major issues, such as settlements and the borders of a future Palestinian State. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

The leaderships of Hamas and Fatah was to meet in Cairo to revive their stalled reconciliation agreement. Moussa Abu Marzouq, the deputy head of Hamas' Political Department, said that the meeting would focus on the long-awaited unity Government, which the parties had pledged to form to prepare for elections. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli Committee of Internal Security revealed a project aimed at seizing lands in the Qalqilya and Tul Karem regions to expand the “Ariel” settlement in the northern West Bank. According to the project, the settlement would be expanded in two stages, first with a construction of 700 new settlement units on the area of Kufur village, located near Qalqilya, followed by a second construction of another 1,400 new settlement units on the areas of Baqat al-Hatab, Izzbat Abu Hamada and Kufur Aboush villages in Tulkarm. The settlement project would be the biggest project since 2010.

(*Palestine News Network*)

In its update for the month of May, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that, each year, an estimated 1,600 babies died in the first four weeks of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. More than half of them died in their first week. (*UNICEF*)

Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that PA President Abbas and Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby had discussed the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and had agreed to ask the General Assembly to appoint a special envoy for Palestinian prisoners. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Canadian Boat to Gaza, in cooperation with international initiatives in the US, Australia and other countries, launched a new initiative to challenge the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza, the only Mediterranean port closed to shipping. The new initiative, called “Gaza's Ark”, would be used to build a boat in Gaza with existing resources. A crew of internationals and Palestinians would sail it out of Gaza carrying Palestinian products to fulfil trade deals with international buyers. (*IMEMC*)

19

An Israeli military official said that Israeli forces had detained three Palestinians in Al-Bireh, Anata and Hebron. The soldiers, according to local residents, had broken into a number of homes using explosive devices. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli army said that it was investigating an incident recorded on video in which troops appeared to stand by without intervening as settlers shot at Palestinians. The incident took place during stone-throwing clashes between settlers from the “Yizhar” settlement and Palestinian villagers from Asira al-Qibliya near Nablus. The footage was captured by a volunteer for the Israeli rights group B'Tselem. (*Nowlebanon, NPR*)

The Minister for Trade and Industry of South Africa, Rob Davies, said that Israeli goods produced in the Occupied Palestinian Territory could no longer be labelled “Made in Israel”. An Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman slammed the decision as having “racist characteristics”, claiming that the new labelling rule would “stain all Israeli products”. Mr. Davies said that the move would help “South Africans who do not support Israel, but who in fact do support the Palestinians, to identify those products... This does not, however, mean any kind of boycott of Israeli products,” he said.

(*AFP, Financial Times, Ahramonline*)

20

A Palestinian man was seriously injured in a scuffle with soldiers when he tried to attack with a knife near the “Gush Etzion” junction, south of Bethlehem. The man, whom locals identified as Salah Nidal al-Zghayar, tried to stab an officer. The Palestinian was taken to a hospital for treatment. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Israeli forces opened fire at Palestinian farmers east of al-Qararah, a town in southern Gaza, injuring one, according to local sources. (*WAFA*)

A man died after falling inside a tunnel near the Rafah border, in the Gaza Strip, a medical official said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

President Abbas concluded a visit to Qatar after meeting Arab officials over the state of the peace process with Israel. Mr. Abbas met with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani. During his trip, Mr. Abbas also met with Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Adnan Mansour and head of the Jordanian Senate, Taher Masri. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani said: “I call on Israel to take a positive step in favour of peace and coexistence,” adding that Israel “can no longer count on the friendship of leaders who were toppled by Arab Spring revolts and it should also not bet on others [acting] against their people.”

If it did, Israel “will definitely find itself within a short period without any friends at all,” he said. (*AFP*)

A Hamas delegation, led by Khaled Mashaal, began an official visit to Kuwait. The group was to meet the Emir to discuss developments concerning national reconciliation and Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Defence Minister of Austria, Norbert Darabos, in an interview with the Austrian daily *Die Presse*, accused Israel of “pointing a finger at its foreign enemies like Iran and the Palestinians in order to avoid dealing with internal social issues,” adding that, “honestly, the fact that Minister Liberman is a member of the Israeli Government is unbearable.” (*Haaretz*)

Hamas and Fatah agreed on a new timetable for a power-sharing deal that envisioned elections in around six months. Under the timetable, the Palestinian elections commission would begin updating voter records in Gaza on 27 May. Within 10 days, President Abbas and Hamas leader Mashaal would form the interim Government, which would be in office for no more than six months, Azzam al-Ahmed of Fatah and Fawzi Barhoum of Hamas said. The officials also said that the Government would prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections. (*The Washington Post, The New York Times*)

The head of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, Hanna Nasser, said that his office would send a group to Gaza to start the necessary preparations for the voter registration process. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Egyptian Ambassador to the PA, Yasser Osman, said that the Qatari fuel ship headed to the Gaza Strip was being held up in the Suez Canal due to its huge size that required a lot of procedures, approvals and preparations to pass. The Egyptian Government, he said, was not delaying the delivery of the shipment on purpose. (*www.allafrica.com*)

The Palestinian Ambassador to Denmark, Amr al-Hourani, welcomed the initiative by the Government of Denmark to label goods that had been produced in Israeli settlements. (*WAFA*)

The Israeli Cabinet held a special meeting at Ammunition Hill to celebrate “Jerusalem Day” when, 45 years ago, during the Six-Day War, Israel captured the Arab eastern sector of Jerusalem. Celebrations included formal ceremonies, parties and the annual flag march through East Jerusalem to mark the “reunification” of the city. (*The Washington Times*)

Israeli forces closed off several entrances to the village of Beit Ummar as settlers took part in a “Jerusalem Day” demonstration, a local official said, preventing residents from accessing the Hebron-Jerusalem road. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Fifteen people were arrested during clashes outside Damascus Gate during “Jerusalem Day” when about 50,000 Israelis marched towards the Western Wall. Five Arabs were arrested for throwing objects at the marchers and 10 Jews were arrested for chanting racist slogans. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu said: “If we place this quadrangle of the Temple Mount in the hands of others, I doubt we will be able to avoid a religious war.” Mr. Netanyahu further added: “Israel without Jerusalem is like a body with a weak heart. Never again will our heart be divided.”

(Ynetnews)

In a decision, the Press Complaints Commission of the United Kingdom said that "While it is correct to say that Israel classes Jerusalem as her capital city, this is not recognized by many countries and those nations enjoying diplomatic relations with Israel have their embassies in Tel Aviv."

(Haaretz)

Settlers set fire to Palestinian agricultural land in an area near Khirbet Susiya, a locale south of Hebron, according to a local activist. (Wafa)

The Israeli Prison Service transferred prisoner Tha'er Halahleh, who had gone on hunger strike for 77 days to protest his administrative detention, to Ofer military prison for interrogation, a statement released by the PA Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs said. Minister Qaraqe condemned the Israeli measure, since the prisoner had not yet fully recovered. (Wafa)

An Israeli military court convicted a Palestinian protest leader of urging youths to throw rocks at Israeli soldiers. Bassem Tamimi, a symbol of Palestinian opposition to Israeli military rule and praised by the European Union as a human rights defender, was convicted largely because of a confession by a 15-year-old who had been interrogated without a lawyer. "I believe in the legitimacy of what I do," Mr. Tamimi said after the verdict. "I lead peaceful protests." Amnesty International had called Mr. Tamimi a "prisoner of conscience". (AP)

According to a statement by a PA Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs spokesperson, two Palestinian prisoners, Hasan Salameh and Ahmad al-Mughrabi, who had been released from solitary confinement under the hunger strike deal, refused visits from their lawyer in protest against ongoing restrictions by Israeli prison authorities. (Ma'an News Agency)

21

Israeli forces arrested seven Palestinians from Nablus, Hebron and Jenin after raiding and searching their homes, according to local sources. (Wafa) Palestinians threw stones at Israeli vehicles driving in the "Teqoa" [settlement] region, *Army Radio* reported. No injuries were reported. (The Jerusalem Post)

In an interview with the US newspaper *The Jewish Daily Forward* in Cairo, Moussa Abu Marzouq, the Deputy Head of Hamas, said that Hamas did not object to the PA negotiating with Israel, but it would consider any Palestinian peace deal with Israel as a truce and "we will not recognize Israel as a State." "Let's establish a relationship between the two States in the historic Palestinian land as *ahudna* between both sides... It's better than war, and better than the continuous resistance against the occupation, and better than Israel occupying the West Bank and Gaza, making all these difficulties and problems on both sides," he argued. (Ynetnews)

At a two-day conference on water and the prospects for agricultural development, PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that Israel's control of Palestinian water resources in the West Bank was responsible for the water crisis. He said that a strategic vision and a long-term plan were needed to resolve the crisis. (Ma'an News Agency)

Assistance to Palestinians by the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency had reached \$118 million. The agency had opened 10 potable water stations, at a cost of \$1.2 million, which had enabled 340 schools in Gaza to have potable water. "We opened our office in Palestine in Ramallah in 2005 and have supported the Palestinian people with hundreds of projects since then," Agency coordinator Kursat Mahmat told *Anatolia News Agency*. (hurriyetdailynews.com)

Bulldozers from the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem demolished a Palestinian-owned house on the Mount of Olives that had been under construction, claiming that it had been built without a permit, according to the owner. (Wafa)

Israeli forces raided a quarry in Rafat, a village near Ramallah, and seized a truck and a bulldozer saying that the quarry was in Area C and did not have a license, according to the owner. (Wafa)

Liechtenstein announced that it would contribute \$109,231 to UNRWA. The voluntary donation would support a range of programmes, such as education, schools, medical consultations and food and cash support for refugees living in extreme poverty. (unrwa.org)

The Knesset passed a law offering a 35 per cent tax break on donations to non-governmental organizations that encouraged settlement, including in the West Bank. (The Jerusalem Post)

Reporters Without Borders strongly condemned the arrest on 17 May by Israeli troops of Baha Mousa, director of the Palestinian Prisoner Channel, which broadcasted from Jenin. The troops also seized broadcasting equipment, computers, video cameras and documents. (Wafa)

22

The Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, William Hague, welcomed Israeli Foreign Minister Liberman. Speaking after the meeting, the Foreign Secretary said: "I made clear the UK's concern about the current stalemate in the Middle East peace process, and our view that there is an urgent need for progress. I expressed the UK's firm view that continued illegal Israeli settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is harming Israel's international standing and endangering the two-State solution." (www.fco.gov.uk)

Taysir Khalid, a member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, called upon the Security Council and the International Criminal Court to hold Israel responsible for its settlement crimes on Palestinian land. (IMEMC)

The IDF was probing 15 cases of soldiers allegedly ignoring settler attacks on Palestinians. Since the start of the second intifada in September 2000 through December 2011, the human rights group B'Tselem had filed 57 complaints against soldiers who allegedly did not stop such attacks.

(Haaretz)

Israeli settlers attacked several homes during a march through Tuqu village, near Bethlehem. Dozens of settlers threw rocks at homes and shops and shut down the main road. (Ma'an News Agency)

The new PA Cabinet welcomed South Africa's decision to ban the labelling of products originating in Israeli settlements as "Made in Israel". (Ma'an News Agency)

In a report on Gaza patients seeking Israeli permits to leave through the Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint to receive treatment, WHO stated that, while the April approval rate was almost 95 per cent, 8 patients out of 764 had been denied permits and 32 patients, including one child, had not received an immediate response and had missed a hospital appointment. (Wafa)

23

Palestinian snipers opened fire on Israeli forces, injuring two, near the border of the central Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Border guards at the Hawara checkpoint in the West Bank arrested a young Palestinian man carrying six improvised explosive devices and a knife. (Ynetnews)

Confrontations erupted between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians in Iraq Burin, a village near Nablus, according to local sources. (Wafa)

Witnesses said that Israeli forces detained at least eight Palestinians overnight in separate raids across the West Bank. The Israeli army confirmed three arrests in Azzun, one in Salfit, one in Ramallah and four in Beit Ummar near Hebron. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Shin Bet cleared for publication a report that it had exposed, in cooperation with the IDF, a number of cells in the Hebron area. One of the cells, which were affiliated with Hamas, had been involved in a roadside bombing attack, while another had planned to kidnap Israelis in the "Kiryat Arba" settlement. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Israeli Government will hand over the bodies of 130 Palestinian militants to the PA in a goodwill gesture to PA President Abbas. The process

was already in motion and, according to the Palestinians, may end the following weekend. (*Ynetnews*)

A recent opinion poll of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza found that 84 per cent supported the immediate holding of elections, 55 per cent supported a return to negotiations and 10 per cent were familiar with the contents of a letter President Abbas had written to Prime Minister Netanyahu. (www.awrad.org)

According to Andrew Standley, the EU envoy to Israel, there was no discussion at the EU level about banning settlement products. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu delayed for two weeks a Knesset vote on a bill geared at sanctioning unauthorized outposts, which the Supreme Court had ordered to be evacuated, with the intent of reaching an arrangement that would evade the need to demolish illegally built homes. Defense Minister Barak said: "We are talking about a bill that damages the State of Israel, the Government of Israel and the settlement enterprise and will be used as an effective weapon by Israel's opponents in the international arena and international legal systems." (*Haaretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Knesset member Ya'acov Katz (National Union party) withdrew at the last possible minute his bill that had aimed to legalize unauthorized settlement homes, citing a request from his rabbi, who had been pressured by the Likud party. The two-week postponement made the legislation less likely to be passed before 1 July, the day the High Court of Justice had ordered the State to demolish five apartment buildings in the "Ulpana" outpost on the outskirts of the "Beit El" settlement. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

According to a local activist, Israeli bulldozers demolished six residential tents housing over 30 Palestinians at al-Jihesh valley, south of Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, raised concerns about the conviction of Bassem Tamimi by an Israeli military court on charges of taking part in illegal demonstrations and of soliciting protesters to throw stones. The EU considered Mr. Tamimi to be a human rights defender committed to non-violent protest against the expansion of an Israeli settlement on land belonging to his West Bank village of Nabi Saleh. (www.consilium.europa.eu)

The Israeli Supreme Court ordered the military to reconsider its refusal to allow four female students from Gaza to go to Birzeit University in the West Bank. It was the first time the Court had indicated a willingness to intervene in the sweeping ban, in place since 2000, on students from Gaza who wanted to pursue studies in the West Bank. (*ReliefWeb*)

A prosecutor in Istanbul, Turkey, prepared an indictment seeking 10 aggravated life sentences for each of the four Israeli top commanders, including the country's Chief of General Staff, who had been involved in the 2010 Israeli attack on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla that had left nine Turkish nationals dead. (www.todayszaman.com)

24

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians, including three teenagers, after raiding their homes in Yatta, a town south of Hebron, and in Jenin, according to local and security sources. (*Wafa*)

PA President Abbas discussed the latest developments surrounding the efforts to resume the peace talks with the US Consul-General in Jerusalem, Daniel Rubinstein. (*Wafa*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Hamas leader Mashaal was to meet with former US President Jimmy Carter in Cairo, the director of an Egyptian non-governmental organization said.

Mr. Mashaal would brief President Carter, who was in Cairo to follow events in the Egyptian presidential elections, about the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and the status of reconciliation talks among Palestinian factions. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers torched farmland near Nablus in the northern West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The EU provided equipment worth €7.6 million for the collection and transfer of solid waste in the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

A lawyer, Ramazan Ariturk, told *Reuters* that the Israeli Government had made a proposal to him through an intermediary foreign ambassador in Ankara to pay \$6 million to the victims of the 2010 Gaza aid flotilla incident. "I told the Ambassador that I did not think the offer was appropriate or moral and also discussed the issue with the victims and their friends and they also stated that they could not accept this," Mr. Ariturk said. (*Reuters*)

The Palestinian Contractors' Union said that it was appalled that two Israeli companies had won bids to reconstruct water distilling stations destroyed by Israel during the 2008/09 war on Gaza. Osama Kahil, the Union's secretary, stated that UNICEF had "deprived Palestinian companies from winning these bids". He said that Israeli companies had then contacted Gaza-based contractors to carry out such projects on their behalf at half the price. (*MEMC*)

The prisoner support and human rights association, Addameer, said that Israel had violated the terms of the agreement that had ended the mass hunger strike staged by prisoners. Two prisoners remained on hunger strike and continued to be in critical conditions, without access to independent medical care. In addition, multiple extensions of orders for current administrative detainees had been issued in violation of the agreement and recently arrested individuals had also received administrative detention orders. (www.addameer.org)

Knesset member Ahmad Tibi visited Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti in Hadarim prison, as well as Karim Younis, the longest-serving Palestinian prisoner, who had been in jail since 1983. Mr. Tibi was expected to meet with Israeli President Shimon Peres to discuss the prisoners' issues. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In its 2012 report on the state of human rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Amnesty International stated that the Israeli army frequently used excessive, sometimes lethal force against demonstrators in the West Bank and civilians in border areas within the Gaza Strip. Israeli military forces had killed 55 civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including 11 children. Violent acts committed by settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank had increased and claimed the lives of three Palestinians. The Israeli authorities had arrested thousands of West Bank Palestinians, more than 307 held without charge while other prisoners had received terms following military trials. Israel held more than 4,200 Palestinian prisoners by the end of 2011. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees had continued. (www.amnesty.org)

25

The Al-Aqsa Brigades said that all of its military branches would be united under one umbrella. An official unity announcement was to be made in the following few weeks. (*MEMC*)

An Israeli settler ran over a 6-year-old Palestinian child near Ramallah who was brought to a hospital. His condition was unknown. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Hamas authorities in Gaza would reinstate Hebrew lessons in high schools during the following academic year. (*AFP*)

The office of the detained speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Aziz Dweik, denied reports that Mr. Dweik had received an "offer" from Israel to be exiled out of the Occupied Palestinian Territory for two years in exchange for his release. (*MEMC*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People announced that it would convene the UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine on 30 and 31 May at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The theme of the meeting would be "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine". On 1 June, the Committee would convene the UN Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, also at UNESCO. The theme would be "Civil society action towards ending the occupation: harnessing the power of youth and women". (www.un.org)

According to an UNRWA report, the Agency had introduced a new holistic model of health provision involving a whole family, which had been having an impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees. (www.unrwa.org)

26

An Israeli settler shot and severely wounded a 22-year-old Palestinian man in a clash that began when a group of settlers set fire to fields belonging to Palestinians in the village of Orif, near Nablus. The Palestinian was handcuffed by a guard from the "Yitzhar" settlement, who threw him to the ground and shot him while other settlers kicked him, according to a relative. Residents said that settlers had fired at people trying to put out the fire.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Sources close to PA President Abbas said that he would seek to form a government of technocrats by mid-June that would accept the demands of the Quartet, including recognition of Israel. (*Haaretz*)

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said that a Palestinian unity deal was "good news" for the Middle East peace process and that France would do everything it could to revive Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. (*AP*)

27

In a statement, the Group of Eight called for a renewal of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and expressed support for US President Obama's speech at the summit. The statement read: "We are convinced that the historic changes throughout the region make the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiations more important, not less," adding that "The time to resume the peace process is now." (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Palestinian sources said that PA President Abbas appeared determined to see Salam Fayyad appointed as Prime Minister of the unity Government despite widespread objection, as he believed that, without Mr. Fayyad, the international criticism he had received because of the reconciliation agreement with Hamas could not be countered. (*Haaretz*)

More than a dozen Israeli intellectuals and public figures had signed a letter urging European leaders to officially recognize a Palestinian State, as "the peace process has reached its end". "As Israeli citizens, we announce that if and when the Palestinian people declare independence of a sovereign State that will exist next to Israel in peace and security, we will support the announcement of the Palestinian State with borders based on the 1967 lines, with needed land swaps on a 1:1 basis." In a statement on the Solidarity website, the group wrote that "the Palestinian appeal to the United Nations to recognize a Palestinian State does not harm the Israeli interest and is not at odds with the peace process". The letter was initiated by the Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity Movement, a group which also organized the weekly demonstrations in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. (*Haaretz*)

In a statement, the 118-nation Non-Aligned Movement demanded that Israel release a "substantial number" of Palestinian political prisoners as a "positive step" towards peace. At the end of a ministerial meeting in Indonesia, the Movement reiterated its support for the creation of a Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, a position it shared with the United States but which had been rejected by Israel. They called on Israel to release Palestinian "political prisoners", including 300 under the age of 18 and 10 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. "The issue is a central one and a practical and effective benchmark in the construction of a just peace in the region," the statement read. (*AFP*)

At the Group of Eight Summit in Deauville, France, the Secretary-General spoke, inter alia, about the Middle East peace process. He urged the international community to act urgently together to push the process, building on the vision laid out by US President Obama, and asked the parties directly concerned to seize the moment and take risks for peace. (*UN News Centre*)

28

The Foreign Minister of Australia, Bob Carr, announced that Australia would support additional teachers and doctors for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East with a \$90 million funding agreement to be signed with UNRWA. (www.dfat.gov.au)

UNRWA said that the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent had contributed \$817,000 to the Agency to provide food assistance to the poorest refugees in Gaza. (www.unrwa.org)

Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians in the West Bank. (*IMEMC*)

Two Israeli police officers were convicted over the death of a Palestinian man whom they had abandoned at the side of a road. Omar Abu Jariban, who was in Israel illegally and was injured after driving a stolen car, died of dehydration. The judge said that one officer's claim that he was sure he would be picked up by someone else was "embarrassing". The incident occurred in 2008, when Mr. Jariban was released from hospital into the custody of the police despite still needing medical attention and being in a confused state. (*BBC*)

A court in Istanbul, Turkey, formally pressed charges against members of the Israeli military for the killing of nine people aboard a Turkish ship trying to break Israel's blockade of Gaza on 31 May 2010. (*Haaretz*)

Fatah and Hamas had begun talks to form a unity Government. An official said, "President Abbas and Hamas Chief Mashaal will meet next week to finalize the formation of the Government and hopefully to announce it should everything go well." (*Reuters*)

The Hamas leadership agreed to allow the Central Elections Commission to start work immediately to prepare for a vote. The Chairman of the Commission, Hanna Nasser, met with Hamas leader Haniyeh. "The committee's work was blessed and we will start working in the next few days in Gaza," Mr. Nasser said at a news conference after the meeting. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The union of Palestinian contractors announced a boycott of all work for UNICEF for allowing Israeli firms to bid for construction work in the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli and Palestinian human rights non-governmental organizations Adalah, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, visited Brussels to advocate for a more active EU engagement to improve the treatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons and to end the use of administrative detention. (www.mezan.org)

29

Israeli army bulldozers entered 200 metres into the Al-Qarara area in the southern Gaza Strip and razed land. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 A Palestinian man was moderately injured by Israeli fire east of Deir Al-Balah in Gaza, medical officials said. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 Speaking at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu called upon the PA to "give peace a chance" and "not to miss this unique opportunity". *(The Jerusalem Post)*
 PA President Abbas met with Jordan's Prime Minister, Fayez Al-Tarawneh, in Amman and discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian territories. *(Jordanian News Agency)*
 The Central Elections Commission said the updating of the voter registry in Gaza would start on 2 June. *(Wafa)*
 According to the results of a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, Fatah would win the Palestinian elections if the elections were held today. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The Minister for International Development Cooperation of Sweden, Gunilla Carlsson, was to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel and Jordan from 27 to 30 May. "The purpose of the trip is to follow up on Swedish development assistance to the region and evaluate how Swedish development work can be put to best use, among other things, ahead of the creation of a new cooperation strategy for Palestine," the Ministry said. *(www.sweden.gov.se)*
 UNRWA Commissioner-General Grandi said that Israel had been too slow to relax its blockade of Gaza and that the export ban had "completely obliterated" Gaza's economy. "The people who really have been penalized are not the people in power in Gaza; it is the common people who are being impoverished by the blockade, but also the business community, which has a greater stake in peace," Mr. Grandi said. *(AP)*
 Israel's oil refineries announced that they had agreed to a two-year deal to supply fuel products to the PA for around \$491 million a year, providing 50 per cent of the PA's fuel needs. *(Reuters)*
 Settlers torched Palestinian land near Tulkarm, damaging hundreds of acres of olive groves. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 Israeli forces razed about 30 dunums of agricultural land and destroyed the irrigation system in Al-Baqa'a, east of Hebron. *(Wafa)*
 Israeli bulldozers demolished a gas station and a shop in Hizma, a town north of Jerusalem. *(Wafa)*

In a new report entitled "Fragmented Lives: Humanitarian Overview 2011," OCHA said, "In 2011, both the number of structures demolished (622) and the number of persons displaced (1,094) in the West Bank was the highest since OCHA started collecting statistics systematically in 2006. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, home demolitions are the direct cause of most displacement." *(www.ochaopt.org)*
 The head of the Islamic court in Jerusalem, Yousef Ideis, said that excavations in the East Jerusalem area threatened structures in Silwan. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 A spokesperson for one of Switzerland's largest supermarket chains, Migros, said that it planned to label Israeli goods produced in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. *(Wafa)*
 Israeli forces arrested 10 Palestinians across the West Bank, including four teenagers. *(Wafa)*
 PA Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Qaraqe said that Israeli soldiers had raided the cells of Palestinian political prisoners in the Nafha prison in the Negev Desert. He said that the soldiers had provoked the detainees to incite them. He added that the detainees had threatened to resume their hunger strike. *(IMEMC)*
 PA Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh said that Israel would return the bodies of 91 out of agreed 100 Palestinians buried in an Israeli cemetery on 31 May. The Spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Ofir Gendelman, said that it had been part of the deal for Palestinian prisoners to end their mass hunger strike. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, warning that if opportunities were not seized, a dangerous "one-State" solution could result. "We could be moving down the path towards a one-State reality, which would also move us further away from regional peace," Mr. Serry said. *(UN News Centre)*

30

Israeli military vehicles raided an agricultural area east of the Az-Zeitoun neighbourhood, south of Gaza City, reportedly opening fire to scare off farmers working on their lands. *(IMEMC)*
 Two Israeli soldiers travelling in an IDF vehicle west of Hebron were injured by stones thrown by Palestinians and were taken to a hospital nearby. *(The Jerusalem Post)*
 Israeli forces detained four Palestinian fishermen off the coast of the Gaza Strip, witnesses said. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 Israeli forces detained a Palestinian man in Bethlehem and another five Palestinians across the West Bank, witnesses and security officials said. *(Ma'an News Agency)*
 During his speech at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies, Israeli Defense Minister Barak said that Israel should consider unilateral moves if negotiations with the Palestinians failed to bear fruit. "We are a coalition of 94 MKs; this is the time to lead a diplomatic process. ... But if it isn't possible to reach a permanent agreement with the Palestinians, we must consider an interim arrangement or even a unilateral move," Mr. Barak said. *(Haaretz)*
 The PA was reportedly planning to ask the Rio+20 Conference to upgrade its "observing entity" status to that of "observing State". *(Ynetnews)*

The Deputy Middle East Director at Human Rights Watch, Joe Stork, said that an Israeli military court's conviction of Palestinian activist Tamimi of leading "illegal" demonstrations had violated his right to freedom of assembly, while the conviction on 29 May on a second charge of urging children to throw stones on the basis of a child's coercively-obtained statement had raised serious concerns about the fairness of his trial. *(www.hrw.org)*
 Haaretz reported that the PA was expected to ask UNESCO to recognize the West Bank village of Batir as a World Heritage site and prevent the construction of the separation fence at the site. *(Haaretz)*
 In a published paper, Palestinian researcher and former prisoner Abdul Nasser Farwanah said that there were 4,600 Palestinians held in Israeli jails, including 215 minors and 5 women. *(Wafa)*

The two-day UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, under the theme "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine," opened at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. *(Division for Palestinian Rights)*

Opening the two-day UN International Meeting on the Question of Palestine under the theme "The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine", Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a video message: "Palestinian women and youth have a right to fulfil

their aspirations without barriers and without discrimination. We cannot just make speeches about them. We must listen to them. We must work with them.” Plenary I of the meeting, entitled “The situation of youth and women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”, examined the Israeli occupation’s harsh socioeconomic impact on Palestinian youth and women, subsequent challenges, as well as domestic and global efforts to improve the situation. (www.un.org, [GA/PAL/1232](#), [GA/PAL/1233](#), [GA/PAL/1234](#))

31

Three Israeli border policemen were arrested on suspicion of having systematically accosted Palestinian workers in Jerusalem and stolen their money. (*Haaretz*)

In a statement, the General Union of Palestinian Workers in Gaza called upon human rights organizations to intervene immediately to stop the attacks by the Israeli navy on Palestinian fishermen that reoccur every fishing season. The Union condemned the previous day’s arrest of four fishermen off the coast of the town of Beit Lahia. It added that the Israeli policy of arresting fishermen, confiscating their belongings and subjecting them to interrogation, was intended to create unemployment in the fishing sector. (*IMEMC*)

PA President Abbas received Germany’s President, Joachim Gauck, in Ramallah. At a press conference after the meeting, Mr. Abbas said that Israel was determined to change the international terms of reference and violate international resolutions, causing a deadlock in the peace process. For his part, President Gauck affirmed his country’s support for peace in the Middle East and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. He also said that he had made his country’s views clear in meetings with Israeli President Peres and Prime Minister Netanyahu. (*DPA, Wafa*)

At a news conference in Denmark, US Secretary of State Clinton called for the renewal of talks between Israel and the Palestinians. She said that the conditions for peace with Israel had improved since the establishment of the unity Government in Israel. Ms. Clinton also praised Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s decision to transfer the remains of 91 Palestinians to the PA as a humanitarian gesture. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

At a meeting with PA President Abbas in Ramallah, President Gauck of Germany said that his country’s main concern was education and security. Therefore, it would grant the PA €70 million (\$87 million) to support these two sectors. (*Wafa*)

Israeli officials opened the Karem Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing, allowing into Gaza approximately 270 to 280 trucks loaded with aid as well as supplies for the commercial and agricultural sectors. (*IMEMC*)

The head of the PLO Refugees’ Affairs Department, Zakaria Al-Agha, criticized a bill submitted by the US Senate Appropriations Committee on Palestinian refugees. The bill, proposed by Republican Senator Mark Kirk of Illinois and approved by the Committee, would limit the status of refugees to that of displaced Palestinians who left their homes in 1948. That would total about 30,000 people, as compared with a count by UNRWA of 5,000,000, which included descendents of the displaced refugees. (*Wafa*)

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine closed its two-day meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The meeting, convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People under the theme of “The role of youth and women in the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine”, had included three plenary sessions on, among other things, the role of information technology in Palestinian social cohesion and state-building, strategies to bolster education and the need to hold Israel accountable for human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (www.un.org, [GA/PAL/1236](#))
