

Division for Palestinian Rights
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine**
 Monthly media monitoring review
June 2007

Monthly highlights

- UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People holds special meeting marking 40 years of occupation by Israel of Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. ([7 June](#))
- Hamas seizes Fatah headquarters and Fatah-affiliated Preventive Security headquarters in Gaza. ([13, 14 June](#))
- PA President Abbas declares a state of emergency, dissolves PA Government and appoints Salam Fayyad as new Prime Minister. ([15 June](#))
- PA President Abbas names members of emergency Palestinian Government. ([17 June](#))
- PA President Abbas signs decree banning all armed militias. ([26 June](#))
- Quartet appoints former British Prime Minister Blair as envoy. ([27 June](#))

1

Israeli troops shot and killed two Palestinian boys near the Gaza Strip-Israel fence, PA security and doctors said. The families of the boys said that the two were 13-year-olds and had gone to the beach to go swimming. An IDF spokeswoman said that the two children and another 16-year-old were trying to set a bomb near the fence. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

Four Qassam rockets were fired from the northern Gaza Strip, causing damage. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli aircraft and artillery struck two open areas in the northern Gaza Strip soon after Palestinians had fired rockets from the area towards Israel, the army said. No injuries had been reported from the Israeli attacks. (*AP*)

An Islamic Jihad member, Fadi Abu Mustapha was killed in an Israeli air raid in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip while on a motorbike. (*AFP*)

An 18-year-old Palestinian from Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip, died of his wounds caused a week earlier by bullets that had been fired by Israeli soldiers. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces raided the town of Kafr Ad-Dik in the northern West Bank and arrested two Palestinian university students. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

At least 2 Lebanese soldiers and 12 others were killed in heavy fighting between Lebanese troops and militants at the Nahr al-Bared Palestine refugee camp in northern Lebanon, security sources said. Lebanese tanks and troops had been seen massed around the camp as artillery barrages intensified. (*AP*)

Israeli soldiers and settlers attacked a non-violent Palestinian demonstration near Hebron, arresting six people, including a journalist, PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti said, who participated in the rally to protest the Israeli Government's seizure of Palestinian lands. Six "wanted" Palestinians were arrested by Israel throughout the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The BBC reporter kidnapped in the Gaza Strip appeared in an undated video posted on an Islamic militant website, saying his captors had treated him well, denouncing Israel and criticizing British and US policies. "We are renewing our demands of the men, the abductors of the British journalist, to protect him and not to harm his life and to immediately release the journalist," PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said. Mohammad al-Madhoun, an aide to Prime Minister Haniyeh, said that the tape might show that Mr. Johnston was in good condition but was not a sign that a deal to secure his release was imminent. (*AFP, AP*)

"There's an understanding that Fatah and Hamas and the other Palestinian factions will meet in Cairo next month and papers are expected from Hamas and Fatah and all the factions... with some proposals and understandings on solving the current internal Palestinian crisis," a Hamas source said. The source added that the papers would also outline each faction's proposal on how to deal with violations of any agreements reached. (*Reuters*)

Israel was waiting for Hamas to provide another list of Palestinian prisoners whom it would be willing to exchange for IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, after the Israeli Government had ruled out releasing most of the 350 prisoners on a first list, a senior Government source said. According to the source, Israel had agreed to release a few Palestinians serving life sentences. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Health was in need of 129 vital medicines because of Israel's withholding of the PA tax revenues, PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Britain's second-largest trade union, UNISON, will debate an economic boycott of Israel at its annual conference from 19 to 22 June. (*Ha'aretz*)

2

Dozens of Palestinian shops and homes were damaged and water, sewage and electrical lines were cut in Nablus by the Israeli army blasting concrete barriers which blocked entrances to the Old City, officials at City Hall said. The predawn explosions left thousands without running water and electricity. Said Handiyeh, a Nablus City Council member, estimated the damage at US \$100,000. He said a 60-year-old woman had been slightly hurt by shattering glass. The military said that the concrete blocks had impeded soldiers from operating within the city. (*AP*)

Israeli undercover forces killed a Palestinian shopkeeper and wounded his brother during an attempt to shoot two gunmen in Nablus, Palestinian security officials said. The soldiers, disguised as Palestinians, had opened fire from a building overlooking a meat and vegetable shop in the centre of the town when the two militants appeared, but hit the two civilians instead, the officials said. An Israeli military spokeswoman said that Israeli forces had shot at a gunman armed with an assault rifle and reported hitting him. (*Reuters*)

A spokesman for the Palestinian national security service said that undercover Israeli forces had arrested four Palestinians, including two members of the national security service, in the Al Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces shot and wounded two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip near the border fence with Israel, medical officials said. According to an Israeli army spokesperson, soldiers had fired at two Palestinians approaching the fence after ignoring orders to stop and warning shots. The troops reported hitting one of the men. (*Reuters*)

A Qassam rocket struck between two houses in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, damaging property but causing no injuries. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. (*Ha'aretz*)

The European Union (EU) [announced](#) that it was to disburse through the Temporary International Mechanism a further €21 million in financial support to Palestinian civilian public service providers from 3 to 7 June 2007. More than 77,000 beneficiaries would receive NIS 1,500, which would be deposited directly into their bank accounts. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu)

3

Israeli troops shot dead Mohammad Farahti, 22, a local leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, during an exchange of fire in the Jenin refugee camp, Palestinian sources said. An army spokesman said that troops had returned fire after being attacked. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces arrested four "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank: three were affiliated with Fatah and one was a Hamas member. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas militants moderately wounded an Israeli soldier and lightly wounded three others in a mortar attack on a base near the Erez border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel. (*AFP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting: "In light of the apparent decline in the firing of Qassam rockets, I would like to make it clear that we are not negotiating; we are not committing ourselves to changing the pattern of our activity. The security forces will continue to operate against terrorist elements in the Gaza Strip and in [the West Bank] without respite. As I have said, nobody is immune." (*Reuters*, www.pmo.gov.il)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni announced that she had sent formal invitations to Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit and Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdelah al-Khatib for talks in Israel on the Arab Peace Initiative. Ms. Livni told the Knesset that the invitations would be open to any Arab League representative who wished to participate. (*Ha'aretz*)

The United Arab Emirates transferred \$80 million in aid to the Palestinians into a new account controlled by PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, officials said. (*AP*)

4

IDF ground forces and more than 15 tanks backed by helicopters crossed into the Gaza Strip, pushing about a mile into Palestinian territory in what military sources called "defensive activity to negate threats," *Israel Radio* reported. The operation focused on an area inside the Gaza border near the Sufa crossing in the southern Gaza Strip. The troops took over houses in the area, searched them, and arrested a number of suspects. Military bulldozers excavated areas used by gunmen as hiding spots. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinian youths in Tulkarm after conducting house-to-house searches. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Representatives of Islamic Jihad agreed in talks with Egyptian officials to work at ending factional fighting in Gaza, Egypt's official *MENA* news agency reported.

The delegation and the head of Egypt's intelligence service, Omar Suleiman, wrapped up talks on 3 June with a "complete convergence of views on the questions discussed," the agency quoted an Egyptian official as saying. (*AFP*)

The Israeli military court of Salem transferred PA Minister of State Wasfi Qabha to administrative detention owing to the inability of Israeli authorities to prove any of the charges against the Minister. (*Ma'an News Agency*, *Wafa*)

Israel is expected to give its official response to the US benchmarks plan before the meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and President Bush later this month, proposing that the Administration delay the recommended implementation for the plan, and asking that the lifting of roadblocks be subject to Israel's security considerations. (*Ha'aretz*)

In a [press briefing](#), the spokesperson of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that France "condemned over the past few weeks the breaking of the ceasefire and the deterioration in the security situation ... It is up to the international community to intercede ... with the Israelis and the Palestinians so that the fundamental elements of a future settlement of the conflict ... are preserved. The establishment of a viable Palestinian State living in peace alongside Israel is the only way to establish a just and lasting peace." (www.ambafrance-us.org/news/)

Amnesty International marked 40 years since the outbreak of the 1967 Middle East war with a call for Israel to dismantle West Bank settlements and roadblocks, for the Palestinians to end attacks on Israeli civilians and for the international community to monitor both sides. "For 40 years, the international community has failed adequately to address the Israeli-Palestinian problem; it cannot, must not, wait another 40 years to do so," Amnesty's regional director Malcolm Smart said in a statement accompanying a [special Amnesty report](#), entitled "Enduring Occupation: Palestinians under siege in the West Bank." "Amnesty International is calling for the urgent deployment of an effective international human rights monitoring mechanism to monitor compliance by both parties, Israeli and Palestinian, with their obligations under international law. This must be backed up with a commitment to investigate and prosecute, through the exercise of universal jurisdiction, those who commit war crimes or other crimes under international law," it said. (*AP*, www.amnesty.org)

5

A 14-year-old Palestinian youth was shot and moderately injured in the stomach by Israeli troops during an operation in Jenin, witnesses said. Medical workers said that the boy was shot when soldiers fired at stone throwers. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli tanks and infantry pulled out of the southern Gaza Strip, ending the largest ground operation in the area in months. The troops had entered the area a day earlier, had detained about 40 Palestinians for questioning and had arrested four men. No major fighting had been reported. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*)

Hamas and Fatah members fought a two-and-a-half hour long gun battle in the Gaza Strip near the Kami commercial crossing, the most serious flare-up in factional fighting in two weeks. Several Hamas fighters and at least one member of PA President Mahmoud Abbas' Presidential Guard had been wounded. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Palestinian Government said that it had agreed on the terms of a ceasefire proposal it wanted to put to Israel to end more than three weeks of violence. It said that all factions in the Cabinet supported the truce – which would have to cover all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and not just the Gaza Strip. The plan called for militants in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli military to end the cross-border attacks simultaneously. (*BBC*)

In a televised address on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, PA President Abbas said that there was a universal consensus on the necessity of establishing a Palestinian State as a basis for international and regional stability. He also warned that the Palestinians were on the verge of civil war. He said that he had spent hundreds of negotiating hours trying to halt the bloodshed, "realizing that what is equal to the danger of occupation, or even more, is the danger of infighting." Mr. Abbas, who had been expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert on 7 June, said that he would raise the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank and the construction of the wall during the meeting. He would also demand the release of Palestinian prisoners and insist that Israel transfer tax revenues it had withheld since Hamas came into power in 2006. (*AP*, *Ha'aretz*, *Wafa*)

The following is a statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General:

On this day, the Secretary-General remembers the men, women and children who have been killed or had their lives shattered by the tragedies of conflict in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinians, who continue to live under an occupation that has lasted 40 years. The United Nations remains committed to bringing assistance to those who suffer and to working tirelessly for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with international law and the resolutions of the Security Council.

At the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war reminds us, statehood for Palestinians, security for Israelis and peace in the region cannot be achieved by force. An end to the occupation and a political solution to the conflict is the only way forward – for Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and the wider region. This will only be achieved through negotiations to bring about an end to the occupation, on the basis of the principle of land for peace, as envisaged in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

(*UN press release SG/SM/11026*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, in a statement, called on "the whole world to stand behind the Palestinians and their legitimate rights which were eroded" by the occupation. Jailed Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Marwan Barghouti called for a huge popular campaign against the occupation, saying its end was "the only option to open the way to peace in the Middle East." (*AFP*)

Palestinians and peace activists rallied in Ramallah against four decades of the Israeli occupation. In Hebron, some 200 Israeli demonstrators gathered and urged the Israeli Government to remove all settlers from the city. In Nablus, dozens of Palestinians shouted slogans against the occupation and took part in a march towards the Israeli checkpoint at Hawara, one of the most potent local symbols of the occupation. Simultaneous rallies were also to be held in Tel Aviv and the

Anata neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz)

In East Jerusalem, Israeli police shut down a Palestinian conference to mark 40 years of Israeli occupation, police and organizers said. The gathering was banned since it was backed by the PA, which Israeli law prohibited from operating in East Jerusalem, according to a police spokesman. (Ha'aretz)

The Israeli public was divided over Prime Minister Olmert's statement that there was no immediate and total way to stop the firing of Qassam rockets on Sderot, with a large minority – 42 per cent – favouring reoccupying the Gaza Strip and staying there to make sure attacks were not resumed. The survey, which had been carried out from 28 to 30 May 2007, showed that 48 per cent opposed such a move. Sixty-three per cent, with 28 per cent opposed, supported a limited ground operation after which IDF forces would withdraw. (Ha'aretz)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) produced a new map of the West Bank, which gives the most definitive picture so far of a territory in which 2.5 million Palestinians were confined to dozens of enclaves, separated by Israeli roads, settlements, fences and military zones. The map was based on extensive monitoring in the field, combined with analysis of satellite imagery. (Financial Times)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics issued a press release on the state of the Palestinian environment on the occasion of the UN World Environment Day.

The Bureau estimated that population density in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would reach 667 persons per km² by mid-2007. Some 88.6 per cent of the households were connected to a public water network, leaving 70,103 that were not. Regarding water quality, only 4.5 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip considered their water of good quality. (Ma'an News Agency, www.pcbs.gov.ps)

6

An Israeli air force aircraft fired at two Palestinians, killing one of them, in the Gaza Strip. In Hebron, Israeli soldiers stormed a Palestinian home and shot dead Yahia Jabaria, 67, and seriously injured his wife Fatima. Three other members of the family were also injured and two others suffered from shock. More than 70 Israeli military vehicles, accompanied by two bulldozers, invaded the town of Qabatiya, south of Jenin, injuring 10 Palestinians, including students on the grounds of Izat Abu Arrab School. Fifteen Palestinians were arrested. (BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews)

Israeli sources revealed that Israel might return up to half of the tax revenues it had withheld from the Palestinians. About \$300 to \$400 million could be transferred in phases through a mechanism that guarantees that none of the money would go to Hamas. Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that the Palestinian side had received no information from the Israeli side on that matter. (Ma'an News Agency, Reuters)

A planned meeting between PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert scheduled for 7 June in Jericho had been called off by the Palestinian side. PA Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr said that Israel had refused Palestinian demands regarding a mutual and comprehensive truce, which would include the West Bank, and the release of tax revenues and Palestinian officials in Israeli jails. "Israel is not responding positively to these demands, so the President decided not to go to this meeting", Mr. Abu Amr told a news conference. (AFP, AP, Ma'an News Agency)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour issued a [statement](#) with regard to 40 years of occupation of the Palestinian Territory. (www.hchr.ch)

A growing number of European Parliament members have demanded that EU recognize the Palestinian Unity Government and resume direct financial aid which had been frozen for over a year. As many as 250 of the 785-member house were for this policy change. They argued that the aid cut-off was counterproductive and that if the boycott did not end, the region would descend into civil war. (AP)

Military police were investigating Brig. Gen. Yair Golan, Commander of the Israeli Army's West Bank division, on suspicion that his troops used Palestinian civilians as human shields, in violation of an Israeli Supreme Court order banning the practice. The probe was launched in March after AP Television News had filmed soldiers forcing a young Palestinian man at gunpoint to lead them house to house during an arrest sweep in Nablus. (AP)

7

Medical sources said that a Palestinian security man, Wael Wahba, 25, was killed and seven others wounded, including three children, in internal clashes in Rafah.

Witnesses said that a group of unknown gunmen attacked the house of a Fatah member, Shadi Wahba, with grenades and machinegun fire, killing his brother Wael. (Wafa)

Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said that its militants fired three mortar shells at Israeli troops based on the borders between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for launching a homemade rocket at Sderot. Israel Radio said that no damages had been reported. (Xinhua)

The IDF arrested eight Palestinians in Nablus, Tulkarem and Bethlehem. Witnesses in Hebron also said that Israeli soldiers stormed two houses, and repositioned themselves on the roofs. (Wafa)

Muamar Abu Bakra, 21, a member of the Islamic Jihad, who was shot by Israeli troops the previous evening near the Sufa crossing into Israel, east of Rafah, died from his wounds. (AFP)

The Quartet invited PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert for talks in Cairo on 25 June, PA Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr said. The invitation came after the last-minute cancellation by the Palestinians of a meeting scheduled to take place during the day between the two leaders. Representatives of the League of Arab States would also attend, Mr. Abu Amr said. (AP)

The High Court of Justice of Israel ordered the State to explain why Palestinians could not travel on the section of route 443 that runs through the West Bank as it connects Jerusalem to Modi'in. The Court also demanded an explanation as to why it had not removed roadblocks that prevented access to the road from Palestinian villages. From September 2000, the IDF had prohibited the travel of Palestinians on the road, by foot or by car, despite the fact that no official or legal order had been issued. (Ha'aretz)

The top PLO official in Lebanon, Abbas Zaki, after briefing PA President Abbas on the fighting in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, said that Palestinians in Lebanon should be permitted to set up their own security force in refugee camps there to prevent the formation of armed gangs in the future. (Ha'aretz)

PA security forces reporting to President Abbas were seeking permission from Israel to import anti-tank missiles, grenades and other weapons. Israeli security officials said that a detailed request had been submitted in recent days and Israel was discussing the issue with the US Security Coordinator in the region, Gen. Keith Dayton. Unidentified PA security officials had also confirmed that the request had been submitted. (AP)

The Secretary-General of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Nayef Hawatmeh, in a meeting with Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, said: "It is necessary to create good defined mechanisms to stop inter-Palestinian clashes and guarantee that they are not repeated. I reject all inter-Palestinian fighting which could lead to civil war or a 'somalization' of the Palestinian territories." (AFP)

The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a special meeting marking 40 years of occupation by Israel of Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Bureau of the Committee issued a [statement](#) on the occasion. A [message](#) from PA President Abbas was read at the meeting by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations. (UN press releases GA/PAL/1055 and GA/PAL/1056)

A spokesperson for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a [daily press briefing](#): "Following the announcement of the expansion of certain settlements in the West Bank, France recalls that it condemns without reservation the founding or expansion of the existing settlements, which are contrary to international law and undermine the efforts being made to revive the peace process. We call on the Israel Government to take the necessary measures to put a freeze on settlement activities in all the Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem" (Wafa, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)

During a telephone conversation, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak "underscored the importance of boosting unity of the Palestinian people at this stage so as to be able to confront looming challenges," a statement from the Royal Court said. (DPA)

8

The IDF opened fire at two Palestinians who were attempting to approach the security fence between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel, killing one of them, Israeli sources reported. Palestinian medical sources, however, have not announced any deaths in the northern Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post) Ha'aretz reported that the IDF had only been partially implementing the directive of Defence Minister Amir Peretz to end the ban on Palestinians entering the Jordan Valley. The previous week, the IDF had begun allowing Palestinians who did not live in the Valley to pass through the checkpoints, but only on foot. However,

sources in the northern Jordan Valley said that in the last few days, Israeli soldiers at the Tayseer checkpoint had not permitted Palestinian pedestrians to pass through. A tour last week by B'Tselem found that soldiers at the Ujja checkpoint, north of Jericho, had been entirely unaware of the directive permitting pedestrian traffic. (*Ha'aretz*)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, now also Acting Interior Minister, told worshippers at a mosque in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip that the PA Executive Force must be recognized and kept intact. "I say it is legal and also has the bravest, cleanest and most loyal men", he said. He also called on Palestinian factions to end violence, saying: "We are not in need of more new agreements, but we are in need of a political will to implement the existing agreements." (*AP, Reuters*)

9

A Hamas member was killed and 40 others wounded in armed clashes between Fatah and Hamas gunmen in the southern Gaza Strip, medical sources said. (*AFP*) Four Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants crossed the Gaza Strip-Israel fence and entered an IDF base. Israeli forces encountered them, killing one.

The other three escaped back to the Gaza Strip. "The aim of the operation was to withdraw with a soldier in captivity," an Islamic Jihad spokesman said, adding, "but the participation of Israeli helicopters prevented that." The militants reportedly had used a vehicle marked with "Press" signs. (*AP*)

Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesman Alaa al-Hadidi condemned a [resolution](#) passed by the US House of Representatives congratulating Israel on the 40th anniversary of the "reunification" of Jerusalem. The resolution "not only contradicts international law and Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem, but also the position of the US Administration itself over East Jerusalem," he said in a statement. (*AFP*)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told reporters that sending international peacekeepers to the Occupied Palestinian Territory was a matter to be decided by the Israeli and Palestinian sides through direct consultations, with the help of the international community. He called for some basic elements to render the mission successful: a halt in Palestinian infighting, a Palestinian-Israeli ceasefire and active negotiations between the parties involved in order to reach a final settlement. (*Xinhua*)

10

The IDF announced that it had fired missiles at a building used by Islamic Jihad officials and an arms factory operated by Fatah fighters. Witnesses also said that the IDF had entered the southern Gaza Strip. The military said that it was a routine, small-scale operation aimed at demonstrating a presence and deterring rocket fire. Speaking at the weekly Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Olmert said: "Our operations in Gaza will continue as long as it takes to block the terrorist attempts to infiltrate and the Qassamrockets." (*AP*)

Hamas militants kidnapped an officer in the PA Presidential Guard and threw him off the roof of a 15-storey apartment building in Gaza, killing him, which set off skirmishes through the city, including gun battles and shelling. Fatah militants surrounded the house of a Hamas preacher, fired rocket-propelled grenades at the building and then entered, taking him away. Later, his dead body was brought to a hospital. A Hamas activist was killed when he was thrown off the 12th floor of a building, security officials said. Four other Hamas members in the building were shot and wounded. (*AP*)

Britain's Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell criticized a planned academic boycott in the United Kingdom of Israeli universities during an address in Jerusalem, in which he also criticized restrictions placed on Palestinian students by Israel. "A boycott is fundamentally wrong," he said. (*AFP*)

The Palestinian Journalists' Association released a statement in Gaza City condemning militants' use of press vehicles, which it said "puts the life of journalists in danger ... limits their ability to undertake their professional and national duties, and harms their journalistic work, which is protected by international law." In Tel Aviv, the Foreign Press Association said that the gunmen's "abuse of recognized protection for the working journalist is a grave development and we condemn those that carried it out." (*AP*)

Tens of thousands of Indonesians rallied across the country to protest 40 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. (*AFP*)

11

Suspected Hamas gunmen shot dead Jamal Abud al-Jediyan, the most senior Fatah official in Gaza, outside his home in northern Gaza. (*Ha'aretz*)

The PA headquarters in Gaza City came under fire from armed Palestinian groups while the Cabinet was meeting inside, forcing the ministers to flee the building. PA Prime Minister Haniyeh's home and the offices of the Youth and Sports Ministry also came under fire. There were no reports of injuries. Sporadic gunfire was heard throughout Gaza City during the day, intensifying several times. "This is shameful for our people," PA President Abbas said during a visit to a school in the West Bank. "I call on everyone to stop this immediately, not only because of the [school] examinations, but also for our people to live a normal life." (*AP, Wafa*)

Fatah and Hamas representatives had reached a new Egypt-brokered truce agreement, Palestinian officials said. Hisham Majdalawi, member of the factional joint committee to end clashes, told reporters: "The ceasefire has been implemented since 11 a.m. local time," adding that Palestinian militants had been pulled from the streets, roadblocks had been removed and militants on the roofs had gone down. However, factional fighting resumed just hours after the announcement, resulting in eight Palestinians dead, including three at the Beit Hanoun hospital. Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City also became the scene of heavy fighting. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

The IDF arrested 10 Palestinians in Nablus and Hebron, PA security sources said. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian militants launched at least eight Qassamrockets into Israel, hitting an area in the Israeli Negev desert, the IDF said. No damage or injuries were reported.

Israel Radio reported that Islamic Jihad had claimed responsibility for the launches. (*DPA*)

"We have not received an invitation [to the planned Quartet meeting in the region] yet so we cannot decide whether to attend or not," PA President Abbas said in Ramallah. A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Olmert said Israel had not yet received an invitation, either. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas would meet with his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy, in Paris on 18 June, a senior PA official said. (*AP*)

PA Foreign Minister Ziyad Abu Amr will pay an official visit to China from 13 to 15 June at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart. (*Xinhua*)

The IDF announced that it would allow Israeli protestors to hold a rally at the evacuated West Bank settlement of "Homesh" on 12 June. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Palestine Liberation Organization announced that Israeli forces had killed 60 Palestinians, including 8 children, in May 2007; 218 Palestinians had been wounded, including 42 children, and 234 others had been arrested. The IDF had demolished 26 houses. (*Wafa*)

Greece's Foreign Minister, Dora Bakoyannis, met in Ramallah with PA President Abbas, Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat and Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. Ms. Bakoyannis [stated](#), "There is now a momentum that should not be lost," adding that the Palestinian people deserved to have their own State and live in peace. She also said that the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet efforts and the meetings within the EU framework were aimed at helping reinvigorate the peace process. Ms. Bakoyannis encouraged Mr. Abbas to continue his meetings with Israel's Prime Minister Olmert, stressing that dialogue was always the only answer to violence. (*www.jpex.gov.gr*)

12

Israeli forces raided the Aqbat refugee camp in Jericho and arrested a member of the Palestinian Security Services. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed near a factory in Israel's Negev region. A man sustained light injuries from shrapnel. Islamic Jihad's military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, had claimed responsibility. (*Ynetnews*)

A rocket-propelled grenade hit the house of PA Prime Minister Haniyeh in the Shati refugee camp while his family was inside. A Hamas website described the incident as an assassination attempt by Fatah. There were no injuries in the attack, the second in two days. Some 200 Hamas fighters surrounded positions of the Fatah-allied security forces headquarters in northern Gaza, where 500 Fatah men had been held up. After Hamas demanded that the Fatah men abandon their positions and threatened to attack those who remained, a heavy exchange of fire ensued. Hamas-affiliated radio stations said that the group had taken over security installations in northern and central Gaza, as well as the town of Khan Yunis. PA President Abbas accused Hamas of staging a coup and called for a ceasefire. (*AP*)

After meeting with Fatah leaders at his West Bank headquarters, PA President Abbas issued a statement saying: "In order to protect the higher national interests of our people and to try stopping the bloodshed, I, in my position as the head of the Palestinian Authority and the head of all security forces, call for an immediate halt to fire". His statement also called for a joint meeting with Egyptian mediators to end the fighting, which had killed 80 people in the past month. The head of the Egyptian mediation team, Lt. Col. Burhan Hamad, said that neither side had responded to his call for truce talks. (*Ha'aretz*)

A gun battle erupted at the European Hospital in Khan Yunis when Hamas gunmen controlling the rooftop exchanged fire with Fatah-allied security forces. Fifteen children attending a kindergarten, who had been in the line of fire, were rushed to a hospital. Elsewhere, a member of the Hamas military wing was kidnapped and killed by Fatah gunmen. The victim was identified as a cousin of Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader Israel had assassinated in 2004. Hamas gunmen attacked the home of a senior Fatah security official with mortars and grenades, killing his 14-year-old son and three women, security officials said. Other Fatah gunmen stormed

the house of a Hamas lawmaker and burned it down. The fighting also spilled into the West Bank, with Palestinian security forces seizing two employees of the Hamas-linked *Al Aqsa* television station in Ramallah. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri denounced the arrests as a 'serious crime'. Fatah gunmen said that Hamas leaders in the West Bank would be targeted if Hamas did not halt its attacks in Gaza. (AP)

The Fatah Central Committee decided to suspend its ministers' participation in the National Unity Government until there was a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Former PA Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath said that Hamas gunmen had ransacked his home in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahia and had shot one of his bodyguards. Mr. Sha'ath, speaking to the media by telephone, said that no one in his family had been hurt and that the attackers had stolen several items from his home. (Ha'aretz)

The following statement was issued by the spokesman of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the resurgence of violence in Gaza, which has reportedly left at least 20 people dead. The intensity of this latest round of fighting and the heightened public rhetoric marks a serious deterioration of the situation, placing the civilian population in Gaza in grave peril, jeopardizing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and threatening the future of the Palestinian Government and Authority.

The Secretary-General calls for the immediate cessation of all intra-Palestinian violence, including attacks against the Palestinian Authority and its institutions. At this extremely difficult moment for the Palestinian people and their cause, the Secretary-General calls for all parties to give their full support to the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to restore law and order.

(UN press release SG/SM/11038-PAL/2079)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) [expressed](#) its alarm at the number of people killed and injured in clashes between Hamas and Fatah loyalists in the Gaza Strip. "We are extremely concerned for the plight of the 1 million refugees who depend on UNRWA's food assistance and medical services. ... However, we cannot deliver food and medical services in the crossfire," said John Ging, UNRWA's Director of Operations in Gaza. UNRWA noted that the violence was exacerbating an already dreadful humanitarian situation, since 80 per cent of the refugee population relied entirely on aid and the economy had collapsed owing to the international economic embargo. (UN News Centre, www.un.org/unrwa)

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said in a statement concerning his meeting with Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen: "Prime Minister Olmert told Dutch Foreign Minister Verhagen that the West must act quickly in order to change the situation in the Gaza Strip and added that serious consideration must be given to the introduction of a multinational force, similar to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), to the Philadelphi corridor area in order to halt the strengthening of the extremist forces." (AP, Reuters, www.pmo.gov.il)

Japanese officials said that Japan was considering providing direct aid to the PA President's office. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso conveyed the idea to his Palestinian counterpart, Ziyad Abu Amr, during their talks in Tokyo. Giving aid directly to the office of President Abbas was one way in which Japan could demonstrate its continued support for his administration and his efforts to pursue the peace process, a Foreign Ministry official said. The scale of such aid had yet to be decided, the official said, adding that one possible project would be to strengthen the functions of the PA Foreign Ministry, as requested by Mr. Abu Amr.

(Kyodo)

13

Hamas militants seized the Fatah headquarters in Gaza City, tightening their control of the Gaza Strip. Witnesses said that Hamas had raised its flags over the compound, amid reports that 14 Palestinians, mostly Fatah security workers, had been killed. Since the fighting began on 10 June, at least 67 Palestinians had been killed and many Fatah fighters had surrendered and handed their weapons to Hamas gunmen, sources reported. PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh had issued a joint statement calling for an end to the fighting. (BBC, Ha'aretz)

A civilian was killed when Hamas militants fired at some 1,000 Palestinians marching through Gaza City calling for an end to the infighting. The militants were at a nearby police station seized from Fatah the day before. In the southern town of Khan Yunis, Hamas militants detonated a bomb under the headquarters of the Preventive Security Services, a force loyal to PA President Abbas. At least one person was killed and eight others were wounded. Hamas gave Fatah-linked security officers in northern Gaza a two-day ultimatum to relinquish their arms or their weapons would be taken by force. Eight Fatah men were killed in fierce fighting near the home of a senior Fatah official, Maher Makdad. Hamas seized control of the refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip after it swept into the headquarters of the National Security Forces. At least 15 Palestinians were wounded during the day, including 5 civilians, 2 of whom were in serious condition. Hamas said that Fatah militants had fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the house of its Deputy Minister of Information, setting the house ablaze but causing no injuries. Hamas also said that it had seized and bulldozed a key Fatah outpost that controlled Gaza's main north-south road. (Ha'aretz)

UNRWA spokesman Christopher Gunness said that two of its Palestinian employees had been shot dead in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Gunness said that they appeared to have been caught in crossfire and not targeted because of their work for the Agency. He also said that the Agency was temporarily suspending all but emergency medical and food programmes. (Reuters)

Israeli forces arrested an Islamic Jihad member south of Jenin, five Fatah activists near Ramallah and two "wanted" Palestinians in Hebron, according to Israeli sources. (Ma'an News Agency)

A Qassam rocket landed near a high school in Israel's western Negev region, shattering several windows. Another rocket landed in an open field in the region.

No injuries were reported in both incidents. (Ynetnews)

The IDF announced that it had arrested two Gaza women – a pregnant mother of eight and a mother of four – on the way to a double suicide attack on Tel Aviv and Netanya, planned by the Islamic Jihad. The two women were arrested at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing on 20 May as they were trying to enter Israel.

(Ha'aretz)

A [statement](#) was issued by UN organizations working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory expressing grave concern about the spiralling violence in the Gaza Strip, which had claimed 50 lives and caused 283 injuries since 9 June. This included two UNRWA staff members who were killed while on duty. The UN organizations called upon all parties engaged in the current hostilities to exercise their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law and refrain from attacks on civilians, humanitarian institutions and carrying out extrajudicial killings. They also called upon Israel and Palestinians to facilitate access to and from the Gaza Strip for humanitarian staff and relief supplies and ensure the continued operation of commercial and passenger crossing points. (www.ochaopt.org)

During a press encounter following a Security Council luncheon, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said the following in response to a question concerning the possibility of deploying a multinational force in Gaza and about the Quartet:

This is an idea [for] which we need to explore the possibilities. I have initially exchanged views on this issue with the Security Council members just a while ago.

I think there are many issues which we will have to consider, whether, if we agree, or if we decide to have an international presence in Gaza, where to locate them, what would be the terms of reference, what would their missions be, and all is not clear at this time. When I had a telephone talk with President [Mahmoud] Abbas yesterday, he raised this issue to me, to consider this issue.

As you know, Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert also raised this issue. I have yet to discuss more in detail with the countries concerned.

About Mr. [Alvaro] de Soto's [United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General] end-of-mission report which was unfortunately leaked to the press, first of all I would like to make it clear that this is his personal view. I would not agree with his point that the Quartet has become a kind of side show. As you will agree, the Quartet has been re-energized and if you look at the composition of the Quartet, the four Quartet principals – if you look even at their individual roles – you have Secretary [of State Condoleezza] Rice of the United States, Foreign Minister of Russia [Sergey Lavrov]; and you have the European Union, represented by Mr. [Javier] Solana, and Madam Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and the EU Presidency, and you have the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Each and every principal, they have their own capacity and initiative and leadership in facilitating the peace movement there, individually. And, collectively, the Quartet, I think, has been contributing a lot to the peace and security in the Middle East. With an energized role of the Quartet, we are now going to have another, very strengthened, enlarged form of Quartet, inviting leaders of Palestine and Israel, and the next

day there will be a meeting with Arab partners involving Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Syria and the League of Arab States. So, by engaging Arab partners, by engaging directly concerned parties like Israel and Palestine, the Quartet will be able to have a more strengthened role in facilitating the peace movement. Therefore, I would like to ask you to have some confidence and trust in what the Quartet will do in the future.

(www.un.org)

The Presidency of the EU, held by Germany, said in a [statement](#): “The Presidency condemns in the strongest possible terms the attacks by illegal militias on the National Security Forces. It calls on all sides to prevent a civil war, to cease hostilities forthwith and to return to a political solution to the crisis in accordance with the agreement reached in Mecca on 8 February. The Presidency strongly reiterates its support for President Abbas.” (DPA, www.eu2007.de)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana told reporters that the EU would consider participating in an international force in Gaza if asked by the major players in the region. He spoke in response to a suggestion by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert that international forces could be stationed along the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt to prevent arms from reaching Palestinian militants. NATO reportedly had a similar stand on the issue. (AP, www.kommersant.com)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu told the Human Rights Council that Israeli and Palestinian authorities should prosecute people on both sides who had attacked civilians in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip and in nearby parts of Israel last year. “Regardless of whether the casualties at Beit Hanoun were caused by a mistake, recklessness, criminal negligence or were wilful, those responsible must be held accountable,” Archbishop Tutu told the Council, which had assigned him to investigate the killings of 19 Palestinian civilians in an Israeli artillery barrage on Beit Hanoun in November 2006. Israel had twice declined to grant visas to him and his fact-finding team, Archbishop Tutu said in a report. (AP)

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the Quartet would meet in Cairo on 26 and 27 June. “We have agreed to be more active in our contacts with the parties to the conflict and with those countries of the region which are capable of contributing to common efforts,” Mr. Lavrov said. (ITAR-TASS)

UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Margaret Beckett [said](#): “This fighting [in the Gaza Strip] is a tragedy. It puts civilians at risk and with today's sad news of the death of two United Nations workers; it makes it harder for the international community to extend assistance to the people of the occupied Palestinian territories. ... I am contacting President Abbas to express our concerns and to ask that he does everything possible to ensure that cool heads prevail ... Dialogue can be the only way forward for the Palestinians.” (www.fco.gov.uk)

14

Gunmen affiliated with Hamas have taken control of the Fatah-affiliated Preventive Security Services headquarters in Gaza City, following five days of intense factional fighting in which at least 80 people had been killed. Flags of Hamas were now flying from the building. Hamas also pounded President Abbas' presidential compound in Gaza City with mortars, though the complex remained under Fatah control, along with two other significant bases. Hamas had issued a series of demands on Fatah, including the appointment of an interior minister responsible for all Palestinian security forces and shared control of Gaza's boundaries and borders. The international community had called for a ceasefire and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa said that the fighting was destroying the Palestinian cause. (BBC, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters)

Members of Hamas took the last Fatah stronghold, the seaside complex office of PA President Abbas in the Gaza Strip. Hamas announced that it had arrested 10 of the most senior Fatah leaders in the Gaza Strip, including the commanders of President Abbas' own elite guard unit and the Chief of the National Security Force, but it later declared amnesty for all Fatah leaders. Several Fatah leaders, including spokesman Tawfiq Abu Khousa, were released. A Hamas spokesperson said that Palestinian police, currently under Hamas control, would take up positions at the crossings. (AP)

The IDF killed a Palestinian in the village of Sayida in the West Bank. The IDF said that soldiers had surrounded a house in order to arrest a Fatah member whom they had spotted on the roof and shot in the legs, which had led to his fall and death. The IDF also arrested a Palestinian, north-west of Hebron, who was transferred to security forces for interrogation. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Abbas chaired a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee in Ramallah. The Committee updated the President on Hamas actions in the Gaza Strip. The Executive Committee had recommended that President Abbas declare a state of emergency and dismantle the Government in response to Hamas' “near takeover” of Gaza, an aide said. It had also recommended that Mr. Abbas call for international protection to declare Hamas' armed wing and paramilitary outlaws and to organize early elections. (AFP, AP, Wafa)

Hamas said it would refuse to accept a multinational force along the Gaza-Egypt border and would treat it as an occupying Power. “The movement would regard those forces as occupation forces no different to the Israeli occupation, regardless of their nationality,” Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said. (Ha'aretz)

Palestinian security forces allied with Fatah arrested three dozen activists allied with Hamas in the West Bank. Fatah leaders said the decision had been made by security commanders to crack down on Hamas in the West Bank to prevent it from taking positions in that area. (AP)

PA Information Minister Mustafa al-Barghouti said that Hamas and Fatah factions were to attend an Egyptian-brokered meeting in the Gaza Strip later in the day. (Ha'aretz)

The Arab League was due to hold an extraordinary meeting the following day to discuss the upsurge of violence in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Around 15 Foreign Ministers from the 22 States members of the Arab League were expected to participate in the talks. Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that Egypt had called for the emergency meeting. (DPA)

The European Commission suspended its humanitarian aid projects in the Gaza Strip, citing the escalating internal violence. “I fervently hope that the project can resume very soon,” according to EU Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel. EU humanitarian operations in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank totalled US\$ 110 million in 2006. For 2007, it had so far earmarked \$80 million. (Ha'aretz)

Amnesty International said, in a press release, that 135 Palestinians had been killed and several wounded in the past month alone in clashes between Hamas and Fatah. Most of the casualties had been gunmen, but scores of unarmed civilians, bystanders and children had been killed or injured. Gunmen from both sides had shown utter disregard for fundamental human rights principles and unidentified gunmen fired on unarmed demonstrators, who had been calling for an end to the violence in the Gaza Strip, injuring several protesters. Two Palestinian employees of UNRWA had been killed and two others injured in the crossfire. Armed groups had carried out the execution-style unlawful killing of captives and the abduction of scores of members of rival groups, holding them hostage, to be exchanged by relatives held by their rivals. All aspects of life in the Gaza Strip had been virtually paralysed, with terrified residents in their homes but unable to feel safe even there. (Ma'an News Agency)

15

A 17-year-old Palestinian, Ahmad Aabid, was shot and killed during confrontations between Israeli forces and Palestinian youths in Kafr Dan, south of Jenin. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces conducted a widespread search campaign east of Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, arresting 17 people. (Ma'an News Agency)

The following is a statement attributable to the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The shocking violence of recent days in Gaza, much of which has involved violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, has caused great alarm and sadness around the world. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned for the welfare of ordinary Palestinians and calls for full respect for their human rights.

The ongoing crisis is of deep concern to the United Nations, particularly in view of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme and other agencies in delivering humanitarian assistance to a large majority of the population in Gaza. The United Nations is determined to ensure the safety and security of the large number of United Nations employees working in Gaza and to ensure that they can continue their vital work to assist a large section of the Palestinian population in Gaza, many of whom are dependent on emergency aid for daily sustenance. This will require the cooperation of all parties to ensure appropriate security and access conditions for the passage of humanitarian goods and personnel both within the Gaza Strip and at key crossing points.

The Secretary-General is deeply disappointed at the failure of the National Unity Government, and the violence, destruction and fragmentation that has brought about its demise. This must end immediately and calm must be restored. The Secretary-General renews his support to President Abbas as he moves to discharge

his responsibilities under the Palestinian Basic Law. The Secretary-General remains in close consultation with the parties and regional and Quartet partners about the way ahead.

(UN press release SG/SM/11047-PAL/2080)

Fatah members shot dead a Hamas member in Nablus, the first to be killed in the West Bank. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades had claimed responsibility. Palestinian security forces, accompanied by Fatah members, continued to arrest Hamas members in the West Bank, in an operation launched in Ramallah, which was expected to go on for a few days. A list of potential detainees contained some 1,500 names of Hamas members. (AP, Ha'aretz) Five children, all under 16, were killed in what Hamas claimed was a blast from an Israeli tank shell near Rafah. Hospital workers said that all five were from the same family. (Ha'aretz)

After seizing the Fatah compound in the Gaza Strip, Hamas members brought security men out of the building and executed them in the street, witnesses said. According to Ha'aretz, at least 21 Fatah men were killed, including Sami Madhoun, one of the leaders of a 1,500-man force that had been set up several months ago as a counterweight to Hamas. (Financial Times, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas dissolved the Government and formally declared a state of emergency. Media spokesman for President Abbas, Tayieb Abdur Rahim, read the decree and announced that Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh had been dismissed accordingly. In a statement read on the Palestinian Satellite Channel, Mr. Rahim said that events in the Gaza Strip constituted "a military coup against Palestinian legitimacy and was a clear violation of international law". In a telephone call with Ma'an News Agency, the spokesperson for Hamas in the PLC, Salah Bardawi, said that "it is the right of the President to declare the state of emergency for one month. After this, he must go back to the PLC in order to renew it or to seek a new Government". Mr. Bardawi also stated that the Gaza Strip had now become more quiet and secure than ever before. "The obstacles which have been made by a trend within the Fatah movement have been removed ... Hamas has ended the battle with Fatah, as neither movement has been removed ... We have achieved this in a battle which lasted for two days only. Fatah and Abbas were not able and were not interested in controlling these influences within Fatah, this is why we fought this battle". (AP, Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad, former Finance Minister, as the new Prime Minister. Mr. Fayyad was expected to choose the members of his new Cabinet within hours. (AFP, AP, Financial Times, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters, Xinhua)

Former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called his firing by President Abbas "hasty" and refused to leave office. He also said that the situation was "not suitable for unilateral decisions". In an address televised live in the middle of the night, he called for unity among Palestinians, urged people to remain calm and promised to restore security. He said that Hamas was still committed to the unity agreement it had signed with Fatah. "I still affirm that the road is open and wide to reformulating these relations on a firm nationalistic basis ... The Gaza Strip is an indivisible part of the homeland and its residents are an integral part of the Palestinian people ... State is a whole and cannot be divided ... President Abbas took premature decisions that betrayed all agreements reached". Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya told a rally in Gaza, "We tell Abu Mazen that we still recognize you as the President of the Palestinian people ... We will never accept the separation of Gaza from the West Bank". Hamas spokesman Abu Obeideh called for the immediate release of BBC journalist Alan Johnston. "We will not allow for his continued detention," he said. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters)

At an Arab League meeting in Cairo, Arab Governments gave PA President Abbas a vote of confidence and called for a return to the situation before Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. Arab Foreign Ministers also expressed support for the PLC. "We are supporting President Abbas and we are supporting the elected Legislative Assembly," Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa told a news conference. A joint statement from the 22 Arab League members condemned what it called "the criminal acts recently committed in Gaza." "[The Arab ministers] asked for a return of the situation in Gaza to what it was before the recent events, the prevention of any acts of violence in the West Bank and the preservation of the unity of Palestinian territory," it said. Arab Governments were to set up a fact-finding committee to look into the recent events in Gaza and report back to the Arab Foreign Ministers within a month. (Reuters)

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett condemned what she called a "coup d'état" by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. She told BBC Radio that it would be wrong for Hamas to benefit from its seizure of power. "The notion that somehow mounting a coup d'état is something that should be rewarded by the international community seems to me completely bizarre", she said. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said: "President Abbas has exercised his lawful authority as President of the Palestinian Authority and leader of the Palestinian people ... and we fully support him in his decisions to try to end this crisis for the Palestinian people and give them the opportunity to return to peace and a better future", she said. (AFP)

Belgium, which currently holds the presidency of the UN Security Council, said that a peacekeeping force for the Gaza Strip would stand no chance of success under the current circumstances. "At this stage, there is not even the beginning of the conditions under which a possible peacekeeping force could operate", said Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht. He added, "It was the aim of the Government of National Unity to bring the security troops of both factions in one police force and that is now a grandiose failure". (AP)

Germany, which is holding the EU Presidency, voiced its backing for President Abbas following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip. "The EU Presidency once again reiterates its complete support for President Abbas ... It calls on all sides to support President Abbas", said Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Jaeger. It also condemned in the strongest terms the violent seizure of power by Hamas militia in the Gaza Strip. (AFP, AP)

Russia urged the Palestinians to halt their "fratricidal" conflict and restore unity. "At this critical time ... we affirm our call to all political forces in the Palestinian National Authority to show self-possession and good sense in order to halt the fratricidal conflict, in which there is not and cannot be a winner ... The way out of the current dramatic situation should be sought through political dialogue on the basis of the Mecca agreement and through the restoration of unity in the Palestinian ranks ... The task of the international community and above all the Middle East Quartet is to show energetic assistance in overcoming inter-Palestinian quarrels", a statement from the Foreign Ministry said. The deployment of an international peacekeeping contingent in Palestine was impossible without the consent of all Palestinian political parties and forces, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a press conference after a meeting of the council of regional heads at the Foreign Ministry. "This requires the consent of all Palestine representatives, including Hamas and Fatah", the Minister said. (AFP)

Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that Israel would only accept an international force on the land between the Gaza Strip and Egypt if it acted to stop weapons being smuggled to Hamas. "What Israel is currently assessing is the deployment of a (international) force for the Philadelphi Corridor ... Those who talk of an international force in the Philadelphi Corridor must know that those forces must be ready to go from house to house and confront Hamas on the ground", she told a press conference following talks with Portugal's Prime Minister, José Socrates, in Lisbon. She also said that "the goal is a two-State solution, or to give the Palestinians their own possibility to fulfil their aspirations in a State of their own ... The decision is basically a decision for the moderate Palestinians." A spokeswoman for Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, Miri Elsin, said: "The fact that President Abbas has fired the Hamas Government is a very positive move in our opinion, and makes it easier to deal and help the moderates". (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, said: "I think what is needed is not external forces; it needs a better understanding between internal forces ... Palestinian political leaders must face up to their responsibility and control the fighting groups and resume open dialogue", he told reporters in Malaysia. The effective creation of two rival Palestinian governments will give Israel "more excuses to reject peace initiatives, on the pretext of the absence of a Palestinian partner ... There will be no victor or vanquished in the infighting between Hamas and Fatah ... All will be defeated and only the flag of the Zionist entity will be fluttering", the Qatari daily Al-Raya warned. In an opinion piece in the Al-Hayat, columnist Maher Ossman said, "Hamas options will from now on be limited to the huge prison that is Gaza ... It would be disgraceful if Hamas ambitions were confined to a trivial mini-State which will most likely be ignored". He called for "a common national platform that would give the Palestinians a united voice". (DPA, The Guardian)

King Abdullah II of Jordan said he hoped that the feuding sides would engage in dialogue to come to an agreement to avert an explosive situation. (AFP)

The Israeli Prison Service separated Fatah and Hamas security prisoners in Israeli jails after receiving intelligence information indicating that factional violence could break out among the prisoners. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

Close to 100 Palestinian officials from Fatah crossed into Egypt in the early hours, Egyptian police said. Fleeing in a fishing boat, members of Fatah's security and administrative apparatus arrived in the port of El-Arish hours after Hamas took control of Gaza. They had been transferred to camps affiliated to Egypt's security forces, a police official confirmed. (AP, Ha'aretz)

According to a State Department spokesperson, Gen. Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator, who is responsible for training the Palestinian forces, would continue his work after a reassessment of the situation. The training would likely be transferred to the West Bank. "Nobody's going to abandon the Palestinian people to the mercies of a terrorist organization and the most extreme of the terrorist organization. We are certainly not going to participate in this extinguishing the hopes of a whole Palestinian population to live in a Palestinian State". (Ynetnews)

Former IDF Intelligence Deputy Gen. (ret.) Yaakov Amidror said that Gaza's transformation into an Islamic preserve ruled brutally by Hamas posed huge and imminent dangers to Israeli security. He said that while the corrupt Fatah was "busy stealing public money", Hamas was strengthening militarily and was poised "to turn

Gaza into Hamastan, like Hizbullah in Lebanon, with Iranian and Al-Qaeda elements. We will now have a full-fledged terrorist State on our borders. This will affect not only Sderot, but soon Kiryat Gat and Ashdod as well and, in the long run, rockets will even be directed at Haifa". He added, "Israel's irresponsible departure from Gaza enabled Hamas to get stronger with tremendous quantities of explosives, weapons, training, money and more ... the solution? Israel must be willing to enter Gaza and remain there for years". (*web . israelinsider.com*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) [said](#) it estimated that more than 116 people had been killed and over 500 wounded in the factional fighting in the Gaza Strip of the previous week. "Hospitals, with the exception of Beit Hanoun and the Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City, are functioning, but their resources are stretched by the large number of patients wounded in the past week's fighting coupled with the fatigue of hospital staff who have been working around the clock," said Eileen Daly, ICRC medical coordinator for the West Bank and Gaza. "The surgeons are overwhelmed with wounded patients, and some hospitals are reporting blood shortages," she added. (*AFP, www.icrc.org*)

The Courage to Refuse Movement, which advocated refusal to serve in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, issued a statement calling on soldiers to refuse to take part in strikes against Gaza. "We, officers and combatants in the Israeli Defense Force, who have served for many years in different fronts and who lost friends in the war ... call on the IDF soldiers and reservists, pilots, officers and gunners, to refuse firing at Gaza ... IDF attacks have already claimed lives of dozens of people, and obtained nothing but an increase in Qassam rockets and a rise in hate against Israel. Bombarding a populated area constitutes a war crime which goes against IDF's spirit and undermines the country's security ... We call on IDF soldiers to refuse to break the moral backing of the State of Israel", the statement said. (*ynetnews*)

16

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinians west of Jenin. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Fatah loyalists were killed in the Gaza Strip. Fatah officials said the deaths were the result of revenge killings. The bodies of seven Hamas members were found in the basement of the Preventive Security Service headquarters, a Fatah stronghold captured on 14 June, and the bullet-ridden corpse of a Fatah field commander was found in southern Gaza. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hundreds of Fatah gunmen stormed Hamas-controlled institutions in the West Bank, including the Parliament and government ministries, and told staffers that those with ties to Hamas would not be allowed to return. The Fatah supporters climbed on the roof of the Parliament building and fired in the air. They planted Fatah and Palestinian flags on the building and tried to seize Deputy Speaker Hassan Kreisheh, but were stopped by employees. In Nablus, Fatah gunmen took over the Hamas-controlled City Council and planted the Fatah flag on top of the building. Fatah supporters also kidnapped seven Hamas supporters and deposed a senior member of the Religious Affairs Ministry. In Hebron, Fatah gunmen took over offices of the Education Ministry and the Interior Ministry, warning Hamas-allied employees not to return to work. (*AP*)

The following is the text of a statement issued by the Quartet principals - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner:

In a telephone call on 15 June, Quartet principals shared their deep concern over the welfare and security of all Palestinians -- especially those in Gaza, whose lives have been most seriously affected by the ongoing crisis.

The Quartet expressed its support for efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of Palestinians and called for respect for the human rights of all those in Gaza and the safety and security of international workers. It called for an urgent end to the violence and the cooperation of all parties to ensure appropriate security and access conditions for the passage of humanitarian goods and personnel both within the Gaza Strip and at key crossing points.

The Quartet expressed understanding and support for President Abbas' decisions to dissolve the Cabinet and declare an emergency, given the grave circumstances. The Quartet recognized the necessity and legitimacy of these decisions, taken under Palestinian law, and welcomed President Abbas' stated intention to consult the Palestinian people at the appropriate time. The Quartet noted its continuing support for other legitimate Palestinian institutions.

The Quartet supports the efforts of responsible regional States to help calm the situation, and will continue to promote a negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting Middle East peace in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

(*UN News Centre, www.consilium.europa.eu, www.in.mid.ru, www.state.gov*)

17

PA President Abbas swore in a new Cabinet and outlawed the Hamas militia. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad was to retain his post as Finance Minister and serve as Foreign Minister in the emergency Government. The small Cabinet is dominated by independents, including human rights activists and business people. President Abbas cleared the way for the Cabinet to take power by issuing a decree that annulled a law requiring the Government to be approved by Parliament, which is dominated by Hamas. He also issued a decree outlawing Hamas' militias "due to their military coup against the Palestinian legitimacy and its institutions." In Gaza, former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called the new Government illegal and insisted he remained in power. "The National Unity Government asserts here that we are fulfilling our duty according to our law," he said. (*AP*)

The following are the members of the Palestinian emergency Government, as reported by the *Ma'an News Agency* :

Salam Fayyad - Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance, the Third Way Bloc

Abdur Razzaq al Yahya - Minister of Interior and Civil Affairs, a Fatah affiliate

Ziad Bandak - Minister of Local Governance and Agriculture, a Fatah affiliate

Khoulood Daibes - Minister of Tourism and Women's Affairs, independent

Mohammad Hasouna - Minister of Economy and Public Works, affiliated to the Palestinian National Initiative

Lameeis Alami - Minister of Education and Culture, independent

Samir Abdullah - Minister of Planning and Labour, affiliated to the Palestinian People's Party.

Fathi Abu Mahdi - Minister of Health

Riyad Malki - Minister of Information and Justice, former leader within the PFLP

Jamal Bawatna - Minister of Endowments and Social Affairs, independent

Mashur Abu Dukka - Minister of Transportation, independent

Ashraf Ajrami - Minister of Prisoners' Affairs and Youth and Sports, independent

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said that the formation of a new Palestinian Government created an "opportunity" for renewed peace moves. "We have a new opportunity in the last few days that we haven't had in a long time. ... A Government that is not Hamas is a partner," Mr. Olmert told reporters shortly before taking off for a trip to the United States. (*AP*)

In talks with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Prime Minister Olmert was quoted as saying, "Israel will be a serious partner if there is a serious Government in the West Bank. We will give the tax money to a serious and responsible Government." Mr. Olmert also said Israel would ease travel restrictions across the West Bank, where the army had deployed hundreds of roadblocks in a bid to hamper militants' movement. On his part, Mr. Ban, in press remarks prior to the meeting,

[expressed](#) concern over the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the already impoverished Gaza. (AFP, UN News Centre)

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett [said](#): “The [Palestinian] Emergency Government which has been sworn in today has our full support. We welcome the conclusions reached by the Arab League at their meeting on Friday including the need for reconciliation and dialogue. ([www.fco.gov.uk](#))

Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay made the following statement on the new Palestinian emergency Government: “Canada supports the efforts of Palestinian President Abbas and his decision to dissolve the Government. We will work with the new Palestinian Government led by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and are looking at how Canada can best provide assistance to his Government. Canada will continue to respond to the humanitarian needs of Palestinian people, including refugees. We continue to support the voices of moderation within Palestinian society to help bring peace and stability.” ([www.international.gc.ca](#))

18

Israeli soldiers and Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Israel and Gaza, killing 1 Palestinian and wounding at least 10. The Israeli military said Palestinians had opened fire on Israeli forces, who had returned the fire. Spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees Abu Mijahid said two of the group’s gunmen had fired at Israeli soldiers and the Israelis had fired back at civilians. (AP)

Israeli forces arrested seven “wanted” Palestinians in the West Bank: five students north of Salfit and two others near Ramallah and Hebron. (Ma’an News Agency)

PA President Abbas dissolved the National Security Council, which had been formed as part of the governing alliance Hamas and Fatah had established in March in a bid to restore law and order in the chaotic Palestinian areas. Mr. Abbas then reconstituted the Council without Hamas representation. (AP)

Dozens of Fatah loyalists, including security men, had entered Egypt from the Gaza Strip overnight, Egyptian security officials said. They said about 70 men had been found by border agents on the Egyptian side of the Gaza-Egypt frontier, including police officers with their weapons. More than 340 Palestinians had taken refuge in Egypt since last week’s Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, while 108 others had returned to Gaza after Hamas agreed to readmit them provided they left their guns in Egypt. Palestinian policemen and civilians entered Egypt via a border point north of the Salah al-Din gate and had been transported to central security camps in Rafah, an Egyptian security official in north Sinai said. Meanwhile, several hundred Palestinians had been camping out in miserable conditions at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) border crossing with Israel, desperate to flee feared retribution and threatened shortages of basic supplies. The IDF said it was providing the asylum-seekers with food and water but would not admit them to the occupied West Bank for fear that there were militants among them who had engaged in attacks against Israel. (AFP, Ha’aretz)

The Human Rights Council concluded its fifth session at midnight after adopting a presidential text on the institution-building of the Council. A compromise reform package adopted by Council members included the continuation of nine expert mandates, one on the Occupied Palestinian Territory among them, while dropping two and establishing a “universal periodic review” mechanism under which all countries would have their rights record examined regularly. The framework for the programme of work basically incorporated the topics from the agenda of the Council, the [press release](#) stated, including “the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories”. The US and Israeli representatives expressed their disappointment, while Ambassador Michael Steiner of Germany, the current EU Presidency, said, “The package is certainly not ideal, but we have a basis we can work with. ... The package must prove its value in practice.” (AP, [www.unhchr.ch](#))

Following are excerpts from the [conclusions](#) on the Middle East peace process adopted by the Council of the European Union at its meeting held in Luxembourg: “In calling for an urgent political solution of the crisis, the EU expresses its full support for President Abbas and his decisions taken within his mandate to declare a state of emergency and to install an emergency Government for the Palestinian territories under Prime Minister Fayyad, underlining the importance of the Palestinian basic law. All Palestinian parties should abide by his decisions. It recalls that reconciliation and national unity behind the programme of peace articulated by President Abbas is the only way to achieve Palestinian national goals. ... The EU will resume normal relations with the Palestinian Authority immediately. With this objective, the EU will develop the conditions for urgent practical and financial assistance, including: direct financial support to the Government; support to the Palestinian Civilian Police through the resumption of EUPOL COPPS; the resumption of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Rafah; intensive efforts to build the institutions of the future Palestinian State.” ([www.consilium.europa.eu](#))

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a [statement](#) on the formation of the Palestinian emergency Government: “Russia, together with the other members of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, gave support to the actions of PNA Head Abbas, who had used the constitutional powers accorded to him. ... Moscow presumes that the new PNA emergency Cabinet will take every necessary action to normalize the situation, improve the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories and, most importantly, end the inter-Palestinian standoff. This will require forging a broad dialogue among all Palestinian political forces, including Hamas. In this context Russia welcomes the decision of the extraordinary meeting of Arab League Foreign Ministers in Cairo on 15 June to assist a settlement of inter-Palestinian contradictions in cooperation with Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Legislative Council.” (AFP, [www.in.mid.ru](#))

China expressed its support for the PA and appealed for Palestinian factions to put an end to their conflicts. “The Chinese Government respects the legitimate status of President Abbas and the Palestinian National Authority,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said during a [special briefing](#): “This morning President Bush spoke with Palestinian Authority President Abbas. He told him that the United States supports his legitimate decision to form an emergency Government of responsible Palestinians and he welcomed the appointment of Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister. The President pledged the full support of the United States for the new Palestinian Government. I delivered this same message this morning in a phone call to Prime Minister Fayyad. I congratulated him on his new post, and I told him that the United States would resume full assistance to the Palestinian Government and normal Government-to-Government contacts. I told the Prime Minister that we want to work with his Government and support his efforts to enforce the rule of law and to ensure a better life for the Palestinian people. ... It is the position of the United States that there is one Palestinian people and there should be one Palestinian State. Therefore, to help ease the suffering of all Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, we intend to contribute \$40 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. We will not leave one and a half million Palestinians at the mercy of terrorist organizations.” (AP, [www.state.gov](#))

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that Israel would pay hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes and customs revenue to the new Palestinian Government soon, but refused to say when. “We believe that time is of the essence,” she told reporters after talks with European Union Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg, but added, “There is a need for a meeting to discuss all these issues.” (AFP)

Jordan’s King Abdullah II ordered the dispatch of urgent relief aid to the Gaza Strip to help ease the suffering of Palestinians caused by a severe shortage in foodstuffs and other commodities. Secretary-General of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization Abdul Salam Abbadi said that the organization had taken all necessary measures to send 30 trucks laden with more than 450 tons of aid to the Gaza Strip. (Petra)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd [said](#) that UNRWA’s operations in the Gaza Strip “had returned to levels seen before the current round of fighting.” (DPA, UN News Centre, [www.un.org/unrwa](#))

19

IDF tanks have crossed into the Gaza Strip through a crossing where 150 Palestinians had been trapped while trying to flee from the Gaza Strip since the Hamas takeover. Witnesses said that they had seen about three Israeli tanks and a bulldozer 1 km away from the border fence with Israel and outside the town of Beit Hanoun. An IDF spokesman said that the tanks had entered Gaza to protect the crossing, where gunmen from the Gaza Strip had shot dead a security officer and wounded several others the previous day. The IDF had prevented Magen David Adom medics from reaching the Palestinian side of the crossing to evacuate wounded Palestinians in the shooting. (AFP, Ha’aretz)

The ICRC evacuated six severely injured Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to hospitals in Israel for specialist treatment that was unavailable in the territory.

Ambulances from the PA Health Ministry transported the patients from Gaza hospitals to the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, where Magen David Adom ambulances had taken over, said Dorothea Krimitsas of the ICRC, adding that some 50 more injured people might need to be evacuated from Gaza in the near future. "Many of them have wounds that need specialized surgical intervention," she said. Around 500 people had been hospitalized in Gaza with injuries since violence escalated early last week, said Bernard Barrett, spokesman for the ICRC in Jerusalem. "The hospitals are under a lot of stress simply because of the number of people injured during the fighting," he said, adding that "it's putting a lot of strain on the staff" and makes it difficult to meet the demand for medicines and the replacement of medical equipment. (AP)

The PA had released 15 Hamas politicians it had detained in the Bethlehem area after Hamas had seized the Gaza Strip, said the town's security chief, Col. Ahmed Haddar. But Col. Haddar vowed there would be no let-up in the hunt for militants of Hamas' armed wing, Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, after President Abbas banned all Hamas militias on 17 June. (AFP)

The Fatah Central Committee (FCC) had decided to halt all contact, dialogue or meetings with Hamas unless it "ends its military coup" and restored the situation to normal, FCC member Azzamal-Ahmed said. (DPA)

Israeli Environment Minister and former senior Shin Bet official Gideon Ezra called for the release of imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti in order to support PA President Abbas. In an interview with *Israel Radio*, Mr. Ezra said that President Abbas lacked support. Referring to imprisoned senior Fatah leaders, many of whom enjoy wide support in the West Bank, he said, "If these people are in prisons, they must be freed. I would have freed Barghouti a while ago. [President] Abbas needs able leaders in addition to [PA Prime Minister] Salam Fayyad." (Ha'aretz)

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern about the continuing humanitarian problems in the Gaza Strip as he held talks by telephone with PA Prime Minister Fayyad, PA President Abbas and Jordanian Foreign Minister Daoud Khattab, UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters. (UN News Service)

The members of the Quartet had agreed to postpone a meeting in Cairo with an Arab League delegation which was to open on 25 June, EU spokeswoman Cristina Gallach said. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas also were to attend the meeting. "We are looking at the possibility of a meeting of the international Quartet soon," Ms. Gallach said, adding that the venue would also have to be changed. An unidentified EU official said changes on the ground had made it necessary for the Quartet members to first meet separately in order to coordinate their stance before meeting with other participants on peace efforts. (AP)

At a [news conference](#), US President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert expressed support for PA President Abbas. "I am going to make every possible effort to cooperate with him," Mr. Olmert said. Mr. Bush called Mr. Abbas "the President of all the Palestinians" and "a reasonable voice among the extremists." (AP, [www.whitehouse.gov](#))

Hamas said that it wished to secure the release of kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston and expressed hope he would be freed within days. "We want to reassure everyone that Hamas is working seriously for Johnston's release. Intense efforts are being made around the clock because we are determined to succeed," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said in a news conference. (AFP)

Israeli security officials announced the arrest of 12 members of a cell of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) that had planned to kidnap American citizens, hoping to demand the release of their PFLP leader Ahmed Saadat from prison. The statement did not give further details about the alleged plot, but said that the cell had also planned to attack a synagogue in Modi'in, a town of 60,000 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The cell's leader, Rasmi Shawarne of Dura, worked as a construction worker in Modi'in although he had no permit to work in Israel, and had used his job to gather information about the town. (AP)

The World Food Programme sent its first shipment of food aid into the Gaza Strip since the latest wave of unrest, which had forced many aid agencies to suspend operations and had led Israel to close border crossings. Two trucks carrying 51 metric tons of food crossed the border between Israel and Gaza and more were expected to follow, UN spokesperson Michèle Montas told reporters. (UN News Service)

The Press Secretary and Director-General for Press and Public Relations in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a [statement](#), expressing "deep concern over the current situation in the Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip", as "such a situation curtails the hopes of those who wish to achieve the Middle East peace based on the two-State solution". The Government of Japan supported "the efforts of President Abbas to promptly end the crisis, such as the formation of an emergency Government" and was "considering providing direct economic assistance to the Palestinians through the Office of President in order to show its support for the President's efforts in a tangible manner", the statement said. ([www.mofa.go.jp](#))

Hamas accused the West of playing politics with Palestinian aid after it resumed assistance to the newly-designated PA Government in the West Bank while the Gaza Strip remained under Israeli blockade. "By announcing their political and financial support for the Palestinian Authority, the West is backing an illegitimate Government," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said. (AFP)

Nobel Peace Prize winner and former US President Jimmy Carter accused the US, Israel and the EU of seeking to divide the Palestinian people by reopening aid to PA President Abbas' new Government in the West Bank while denying the same to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Mr. Carter, who was addressing a human rights conference in Ireland, also said that the US Administration's refusal to accept Hamas' 2006 election victory was "criminal." (AP)

Egypt's ambassador to the PA, who had been working in the Gaza Strip over the past 12 years, would move to Ramallah, according to the decision made by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit, Foreign Ministry spokesman Alaa Hadidi said in a statement. The Egyptian diplomatic mission in the Gaza Strip had withdrawn from Gaza City on the afternoon of 15 June, the spokesman said, adding that all Egyptian diplomats had moved to Ramallah to support the emergency Palestinian Government. Egyptian sources, however, said that the move was not meant to cut off Cairo's relations with Hamas. (DPA, Xinhua)

"We hope both parties can recommit themselves to the commitments of Mecca," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said in Madrid. (AP)

20

Four Palestinians were killed in an exchange of fire with Israeli troops as Israeli tanks entered the southern Gaza Strip before dawn. Two of the dead, Khaled al-Farra, 18, and Ahmed al-Abadlah, 20, had belonged to Hamas; Abed Shaath, 22, to the Islamic Jihad; and the fourth to the Popular Resistance Committees, Palestinian hospital officials said. The IDF said the entrance of the troops had been planned, was not a broad operation and was meant to counter militant activity, including arms smuggling. Hamas and Islamic Jihad said their fighters had opened fire with rifles and rocket-propelled grenades on Israeli troops, who had pushed up to 1 km inside the southern Gaza Strip near Khan Yunis. An Israeli soldier was wounded after troops moved several hundred metres into the central Gaza Strip, west of the Kissufim border crossing, an IDF spokeswoman said. (AFP, AP)

Two Palestinians were killed near Jenin in a shoot-out with Israeli troops who arrived to arrest them. They were identified by Palestinian medical and security sources as Ziad Malaysheh, 25, from Islamic Jihad, and Ibrahim Abed, 25, from an armed group linked to Fatah. (AFP, AP)

Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for launching two rockets that landed east of Sderot in southern Israel, causing no injuries or damage. Israel retaliated shortly after with an airstrike, the first since Hamas took over the territory. The strike had targeted two rocket launchers in waste ground in northern Gaza, an IDF spokeswoman said. No injuries were reported in the strike. (AFP, AP)

Israel and the new PA Government opened formal high-level contacts, marking an end to Israel's 15-month-long boycott. An Israeli Foreign Ministry statement said Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni had told Prime Minister Fayyad that establishment of his emergency Government, replacing one headed by Hamas, would allow "progress on various issues ... as well as advance the political process". (Reuters)

PA President and PLO Chairman Abbas was to address the PLO Central Council meeting for a two-day session in Ramallah. "One of the main issues of discussion will be to reiterate the legitimacy of the decisions taken by President Abbas with regard to the bloody coup by Hamas," Council member Ahmad Majdalani told Reuters. The Council would also debate the possibility of moving up a presidential election in addition to a parliamentary one currently scheduled for 2010, said Saleh Rafat, another member. The 130-member Council, which had last met in 2003 and where Hamas is not represented, is an intermediate body that ratifies the decisions of the 18-member PLO Executive Committee when the full 700-member Palestine National Council (PNC), or Parliament-in-exile, is not in sitting. The PLO has oversight of the PA and both the Central Council and the full PNC have powers to dissolve the Authority. (AFP, Reuters)

Ahmad Yousef, political adviser of former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, said: "I hope that Israel will release Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti because Fatah and the homeland need him ... Marwan is a significant leader and a decent struggler as well as a nationalistic symbol badly needed at this critical stage". (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak instructed IDF officials to let in "humanitarian cases" at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, the Defence Ministry said. No numbers were specified and specific guidelines for determining urgency were not released. A teenager with leukemia and two other chronically ill Palestinians were on their way through shortly after, the IDF said. Saeb Erekat said that Israel had agreed to transfer 55 persons to Israeli hospitals. (AP)

In a televised speech, PA President Abbas described Hamas as "murderous terrorists" and accused them of plotting to assassinate him, and that Hamas was trying to

build an empire of "darkness" in Gaza. He also said the time was ripe to restart peace talks with Israel, under the umbrella of an international peace conference. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said, "What he was saying was not appropriate for a President ... The President has harmed himself with his words". Ghazi Hamad, an aide to former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, emphasized the importance of reunifying the two parts of any future Palestinian State. "We are trying to find a solution. Hamas is not interested in controlling Gaza. We are not trying to build a State or empire in Gaza ... Sooner or later we have to sit together. President Abbas cannot control things without Hamas and Hamas cannot control the situation without Fatah. We want a unified authority". (AP, *The Independent*)

The Central Council of the PLO called for "dissolving all militias, including the Hamas Executive Force and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. In the resolution, the Council backs President Abbas' recent steps, condemns Hamas' takeover of Gaza and asks Hamas to restore the situation to what it was before its military campaign.

The resolution also calls for holding presidential and legislative elections once Hamas gave up military control over Gaza. Hamas rejected the PLO's ruling as "illegal and not legitimate" (AP, *Ha'aretz*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *Reuters*)

Israel's Supreme Court heard a petition by Physicians for Human Rights (Israel) demanding that Israeli authorities offer immediate medical treatment to 26 critically ill Palestinians hospitalized in the Gaza Strip. Ran Yaron, a doctor with the group, told *Israel Radio* that the lives of 15 of the patients were in danger because treatment was not available in Gaza. Among them was an 18-year-old woman with lupus, who was on life support. Others, including at least two children, were suffering from cancer or other serious diseases. (AP)

"All eventualities are open now. We can reach a consensus on a Government, a technocrat Government, that includes neither Fatah nor Hamas," Moussa Abu Marzouk, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, said. "The Government could not work without a Palestinian consensus, especially between Fatah and Hamas," he added. (DPA)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas would meet next week, Mr. Abbas' aide, Yasser Abed Rabbo, told Palestinian radio. Mr. Olmert's office confirmed the two would meet but said a date had not been set. (AP)

"The reopening of the [Al-Muntar] Kami crossing is vital to prevent general food shortages in two to four weeks" in the Gaza Strip, OCHA said in its latest [situation report](http://www.ochaopt.org) (www.ochaopt.org, *Reuters*)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Michael Williams [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. (UN News Centre, UN press release SC/9053)

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Palestinian Territory Kevin Kennedy issued a report claiming that a humanitarian crisis would break out in Gaza within two to four weeks if the Al-Muntar (Kami) crossing was not reopened. Israeli Defence officials had rejected the criticism. (The Jerusalem Post)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon joined EU, Canada and the US in criticizing the Human Rights Council for picking on Israel as part of an agreement on its working rules. A UN statement said "The Secretary-General is disappointed at the Council's decision to single out only one specific regional item, given the range and scope of allegations of human rights violations throughout the world." The statement did not mention Israel or the Palestinian territory by name. (Reuters, *Ha'aretz*, UN press release SG/SM/11053-HRC/8)

UNRWA issued a statement to mark World Refugee Day. The Deputy-Commissioner General Filippo Grandi described as "positive" the interest the international community had shown in "supporting the Palestinian people and revitalizing the peace process". However, he warned that "the majority of citizens in Gaza – and increasingly in the West Bank – are desperately struggling to maintain societal values, while societal values are collapsing, creating room for violence and radicalism". "For the sake of peace and the sake of saving human lives, the international community must re-engage in a meaningful, constructive way with all Palestinian people", said Mr. Grandi. Commenting on developments of recent days, Mr. Grandi said that UNRWA wished "to tell policymakers that their judgements and their decisions must be informed by the concerns and those who have suffered the most through the years of missed opportunities – Palestinian women and men that want to live in peace. In the short term, humanitarian assistance must continue to be provided for those in need, in the West Bank and in Gaza ... In the long term, no pursuit of peace will be successful unless assistance geared towards development and the building of institutions resumes for the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, the root causes of the conflict are tackled and – now in particular – reconciliation among Palestinians is actively promoted". (Ma'an News Agency)

Knesset member Mohamed Barakah told a Knesset session that Israel had transformed the Gaza Strip over the last year into "a jail full of depression and frustration". (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli officials authorized entry into Israel of all foreign nationals living in the Gaza Strip. A first group of 90 Ukrainians had gone through the Beit Hanoun (Erez) border crossing into Israel, with approximately 140 Russian citizens scheduled to follow immediately after, IDF spokesman Lt. Shadi Yassin said. The head of the Romanian Representative Office to the PA said that 60 to 70 Romanian women, married to Palestinians who had studied in Romania, and their children, were also desperate to leave. Overall, more than 100 foreigners had left Gaza since Hamas fighters had taken control there, the IDF said. (AFP, AP)

A plane carrying 72 Russian refugees and 7 Belarusians from the Gaza Strip took off for Moscow. The vast majority, if not all, of the passengers were Russian women who had married Palestinian men, their children, and their husbands. (DPA)

21

Israeli forces invaded the southern Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians and injuring another four. Two of the victims were affiliated with the Al-Qassam Brigades; a third was affiliated with the Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades; and the fourth was an operative within the Al-Quds Brigades. Eyewitnesses stated that Israeli bulldozers flattened 123 dunums of vegetables in addition to storming the Al-Ma'arri school in Al-Qarara village and destroying its playground. (Ma'an News Agency)

Most of the Palestinians who had been waiting for days at northern Gaza's border crossing with Israel had left, after the IDF had offered them a choice between travelling to Egypt or returning home, the army said. Some 15 to 20 Palestinians currently remained outside the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, seeking travel permits to the West Bank. (DPA, *Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas' adviser, Yasser Abed Rabbo, said that Mr. Abbas would "work to conduct presidential and legislative elections in the West Bank and Gaza." (AP)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak invited Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian leaders to a peace summit next week in Egypt. A spokesman in the office of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said, "The purpose will be to strengthen the moderates and to promote Israeli-Palestinian ties. These are not peace talks". Spokeswoman Miri Eisin said Prime Minister Olmert intended to secure approval ahead of the meeting to release at least \$600 million in tax revenues owed to the Palestinians to the new emergency Cabinet. PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat said, "We need to deliver the end of occupation – a Palestinian State. If we don't have hope, Hamas will export despair to the people". (AFP, AP, BBC)

A poll published by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research showed that 75 per cent of Palestinians favoured early elections. The poll was conducted during and after the Hamas takeover of Gaza last week. Seventy per cent said that the chances for the establishment of a Palestinian State in the next five years were dim. Only 13 per cent of respondents expressed satisfaction with President Abbas' handling of the crisis and his overall ratings dropped to 35 per cent from 48 per cent in March. Forty per cent said that they would not participate in the elections if the only candidates were President Abbas and former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. Of those who said that they would go to the polls, 40 per cent said that they would vote for President Abbas against 42 per cent for Mr. Haniyeh. A full 59 per cent said that Fatah and Hamas were equally responsible for the infighting. Seventy-one per cent said that they believed the two sides were equally losers. The poll also said that if jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti were to run against Mr. Haniyeh, he would win 59 per cent of the votes. (AFP, AP, *Ha'aretz*)

Likud Leader Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel needed the help of Egypt and Jordan to bolster forces in the PA against Hamas. Speaking to CNN, Mr. Netanyahu said that strengthening PA President Abbas' Fatah faction with the help of moderate countries could be the key to solving the Middle East crisis. "I think ultimately, to resolve the Palestinian problem we should have a regional component. We will have Egypt help in Gaza once the Hamas rule is terminated and we will have to have Jordan help with the West Bank. Mr. Netanyahu lauded PA President Abbas for calling Hamas "murderous terrorists", but lamented that he should have done so in the past. He added that while President Abbas might have genuine intentions to fight terror and resume peace talks with Israel, he lacked the means to provide security in the Palestinian Territory when Iran and Syria were trying to sow strife. (Ynetnews)

Two senior US administration sources told BBC that British Prime Minister Tony Blair's aides had indicated he is interested in the role of Special Envoy to the Middle East. Israeli Government spokesman Miri Eisin said, "Officials in the Prime Minister's Office are aware of this idea and Prime Minister Olmert is very

supportive of Prime Minister Blair and of his continuing involvement in the Middle East and the peace process.” (BBC, New York Times)

Responding to a question about the possibility of Prime Minister Blair becoming a Quartet Envoy, Michèle Montas, spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, told reporters: “The issue was raised with the Secretary-General during different conversations with some Quartet principals. The issue is still under discussion.” (UN News Centre)

David Shearer, Head of OCHA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, told a news conference that flour and other essential supplies in the Gaza Strip would run out within two to three weeks unless the Al-Muntar (Karni) cargo crossing was reopened by Israel. “As a series of agencies in the UN, we cannot support the whole of the Gaza Strip with aid flows. The market has to be able to work and at the moment it is not working,” he warned. (UN News Centre)

Acting PLC speaker Ahmad Bahar criticized the suggestion that the PLC be replaced by the Palestine Central Council and the Palestine National Council as the Palestinians’ legitimate point of reference. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israel would not buy offshore natural gas from the Gaza Strip as long as Hamas “continues its terrorism and control” of the territory, the Israeli daily *Ma’ariv* reported, citing an unnamed high-ranking Israeli political source. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said in a telephone interview: “Hamas does not have any problem cooperating with the British gas company [BG Group], but certainly there is a necessity to re-evaluate the whole agreement with the Palestinian Authority.”

(Bloomberg.com, Ma’an News Agency)

22

The IDF carried out an arrest campaign in Jenin and Nablus. Palestinians tossed three explosive devices at Israeli soldiers. (Ma’an News Agency, Ha’aretz)

Israeli forces entered Jabalya in the north of Gaza Strip. Eyewitnesses reported that a large number of Israeli military vehicles, backed by armoured bulldozers, had established control over a petrol station in the area and had turned it into a military base. (IMEMC)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert was preparing a package of “goodwill measures” which he intended to present to PA President Abbas at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, *Israel Radio* reported. Mr. Olmert’s Cabinet is expected to authorize in its weekly meeting the release of frozen PA tax revenues. Mr. Olmert also wants to remove a number of roadblocks in the West Bank and transfer equipment, ammunition and weapons to PA security forces. He was, however, not planning to meet Palestinian demands for a prisoner release, the radio said, quoting a senior Government source. According to the proposal, Israel would continue to work with President Abbas and return to work with the PA Government, with its recognition based on the Government’s acknowledgement of the Quartet principles. (DPA, Ha’aretz, Ynetnews)

PA President Abbas issued a decree dismissing Rashid Abu Shbak as General Director of PA Internal Security. He also dissolved the National Security Council and cancelled the clause of a law requiring approval of Cabinet minister appointments by the PLC. (Reuters)

The Quartet would meet in Jerusalem on 26 June at the envoy level, diplomats said. The Russian Federation’s Middle East Envoy Sergei Yakovlev told *Interfax*:

“The Quartet will discuss the current situation in the region, the tasks of the four international mediators and future plans.” (AP, Interfax)

The Indonesian Government expressed deep concern over the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kristianto Legowo said.

He told a press conference that Indonesia called for an end to the protracted conflict and asked Palestinian leaders to take steps towards the reconciliation of factions. (Xinhua)

Speaking in Washington after a meeting with presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu called on the Jordanian Government to consider stationing troops in the West Bank, and on the Egyptian Government to increase its efforts in the prevention of arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip. “The Badr Brigade, which is Jordanian-Palestinian, can create law and order,” Mr. Netanyahu said. (IMEMC, Israelnationalnews.com)

Jordan sent through Egypt convoys of trucks filled with foodstuffs to the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing, on the instructions of King Abdullah II.

(IMEMC, Petra)

23

In a combined operation of the IDF and the Shin Bet security service in the village of Arura, north of Ramallah, 41-year-old Salah al-Aruri was arrested. He was considered to be one of the founding members in the West Bank of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’ military wing, and one of its leaders. (Ha’aretz)

The Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for launching 15 mortar shells at Israeli military vehicles stationed east of Al-Qarara in Khan Yunis. The brigades issued a statement announcing that the shelling was in retaliation for the frequent Israeli attempts to penetrate the Gaza Strip. (Ma’an News Agency)

The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, and the Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, announced that they had bombed an Israeli military jeep in the southern Gaza Strip. They said they had planted a 30 kg explosive device in a military jeep which was patrolling the eastern border of the Gaza Strip. The brigades said the jeep had gone up in flames. (Ma’an News Agency)

24

At least one Palestinian was killed and four others wounded in an Israeli air strike on a car driving through Gaza City, Palestinian security sources said. The dead man was identified as Hossam Harb, 32, a local leader of the Saraya Al-Quds, medics said. An Israeli military spokeswoman confirmed that the aircraft “launched a raid against the Gaza Strip”, adding that “it targeted a cell of Islamic Jihad responsible for firing rockets against Israel”. (AFP)

The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades claimed responsibility for firing two missiles at Kissufim, an Israeli military base close to the Gaza Strip. (Ma’an News Agency)

An Israeli police force arrested an Islamic Jihad operative at the northern West Bank village of Kufir Tell, close to Nablus in the northern West Bank. (Ma’an News Agency)

Former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh rejected a planned summit of Israeli and Arab leaders in Egypt, saying that only “resistance” would produce results for his people. Mr. Haniyeh said, “The Americans won’t give anything. Israel won’t give us anything. Our land, our nation will not come back to us except with steadfastness and resistance”. He called any hopes generated by the summit a “mirage” and “illusions.” (AP)

Fatah refused former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh’s call for unconditional dialogue between the Hamas and Fatah. “It was Hamas who rebelled against legitimacy and democracy,” Fatah spokesman Ahmad Abd Ar-Rahman said. He told the BBC that there would be no dialogue as long as “the mutineers impose their own law.” He also highlighted the fact that Hamas refused to go for early elections. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israel’s *Channel 2* television reported that, according to Hamas sources, Gilad Shalit, the IDF soldier captured a year ago, was being held in the southern Gaza Strip near the Shaboura refugee camp, close to the town of Rafah, in an underground room inside a booby-trapped building. (Ha’aretz)

Israel would be using two small border passages into Gaza to bring in basic supplies, officials said. The decision to use smaller crossings was based on security concerns after Hamas’ takeover of the Gaza Strip. According to Israeli officials, around 3,000 tons of emergency food would be transferred to avert a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, even without reopening the major Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing. Oxfam International Director Jeremy Hobbs said that closing the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing could cause a health disaster, as it would prevent companies from bringing in water treatment equipment and chemicals. (Ha’aretz)

British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s appointment as an international envoy for the Middle East Quartet was set to be formally agreed on 26 June – a day before he leaves office. Representatives of the Quartet would gather in Jerusalem on 26 June at a specially convened meeting that would confirm Mr. Blair as the Quartet’s new envoy. (The Financial Times)

25

Israeli gunships shelled Palestinian fishermen’s boats off the coast of the northern Gaza Strip. In a separate incident, the IDF fired at houses in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, causing damage. (International Press Center)

Palestinian mortar fire on the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip forced a halt to crucial humanitarian aid entering the Strip, UN and Israeli military officials said. The UN condemned the attack on the crossing, saying the attack served to “endanger the provision of vital humanitarian assistance to the civilian population of Gaza.” The army said the mortar fire was accompanied by another explosion nearby, apparently a roadside bomb, forcing the closure for security reasons. The militant group Islamic Jihad took responsibility for the shooting in an announcement on its website. Shalom Dorr, an Israeli military spokesman, said around 80 truckloads of humanitarian aid had been entering Gaza daily. (AP)

PA President Abbas and Israel’s Prime Minister Olmert joined Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah II of Jordan for a summit meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh. Prime Minister Olmert was expected to announce a series of steps at the summit to bolster President Abbas and the emergency Government headed by Salam Fayyad. Mr. Olmert would present Mr. Abbas with a package of benefits that the Cabinet had authorized, excluding the lifting of roadblocks and other restrictions on Palestinian movement. The package would include: release in instalments of PA funds collected by Israel in the form of customs duties and value-added taxes, ensuring that none of the money is given to militant groups; continuation of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip - water, electricity, food, medicines, medical services and the opening of the Kerem Shalom to the human and cargo passage; reissuing entry cards to Palestinians and expanding permits to Palestinian businessmen wishing to cross into Israel; allowing the transfer of armoured cars to the Fatah forces in the West Bank; renewed security cooperation in

the West Bank; and resumption of the work of the combined security committee - Israel, Egypt, PA, US - particularly in efforts to curtail arms smuggling to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. (*Ha'aretz*)

At the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert announced that he would present to the Israeli Government at its upcoming meeting a proposal to release approximately 250 prisoners who were members of Fatah and did "not have blood on their hands," as "a gesture of good will." Mr. Olmert's spokesperson Miri Eisin said that the prisoners would be freed within 48 hours of Cabinet approval on Sunday, 1 July. At the summit, Mr. Abbas had requested that Israel allow a Palestinian military unit based in Jordan into the West Bank to help him enforce order, Ms. Eisin said. The 2,000-man unit, known as the Badr Brigade, is made up of Fatah loyalists but is under Jordanian command. Ms. Eisin said the request was "being evaluated" by Israel. Also, Mr. Abbas reportedly demanded that Marwan Barghout be released. (*AP, Ynetnews, www.pmo.gov.il*)

A new video recording showing abducted British *BBC* journalist Alan Johnston wearing an apparent explosives belt and warning it would be detonated if an attempt was made to free him by force had been posted on a website by the Army of Islam, a group with apparent Al-Qaida links that had claimed responsibility for seizing Mr. Johnston. "Captors tell me that very promising negotiations were ruined when the Hamas movement and the British Government decided to press for a military solution to this kidnapping," Mr. Johnston said in the recording, adding "I'd ask the *BBC* and anyone in Britain who wishes me well to support me in that appeal," he said. "It seems the answer is to return to negotiations, which I am told are very close to achieving a deal." (*AP*)

Hamas released the first audio message from kidnapped IDF corporal Gilad Shalit since his abduction exactly one year ago. The recording was posted on a Hamas website and the voice identified as Shalit's said that he was disappointed over the Israeli Government's lack of interest in his fate. Mr. Shalit added that his health had been deteriorating and that he would need to be hospitalized for a long period of time. Israeli Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour Eli Yishai called on the Government to examine the possibility of direct negotiations with Mr. Shalit's captors. (*Ha'aretz*)

In an audiotape, Ayman Al-Zawahri, Al-Qaida's deputy leader, called on Muslims around the world to support Hamas with weapons, money and attacks on US and Israeli interests in a Web audiotape, urging Hamas to unite with Al-Qaida. The authenticity of the tape could not be independently confirmed, but it was posted on a Web forum where Mr. Al-Zawahri had issued messages in the past. "We certainly hope that Hamas does not encourage nor allow Al-Qaida operatives to use the Gaza Strip as a safe haven. That would do nothing for the Palestinian people," National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said in Washington.

(*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

26

A 32-year-old Islamic Jihad member, Husam Harb, was killed when an Israeli air strike hit his car in Gaza City and wounded three bystanders. Also, Israeli forces arrested six Palestinians in Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah and Nablus. (*International Press Center*)

Two Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, one of which hit a building in the southern town of Sderot, causing extensive damage. A second rocket fell in an open area near Sderot. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Palestinian group holding captive *BBC* journalist Alan Johnston threatened to kill him if its demands for the release of Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, who is held in Jordan, were not met. In response, Ghazi Hamad, spokesman for former Prime Minister Haniyeh said: "We reject the continued captivity of Alan and we are still working to release him at the earliest possible opportunity." (*AP*)

PA President Abbas banned all armed militias "regardless of their affiliation." The new decree said "the armed militias and the irregular military or paramilitary formations are forbidden from carrying out any clandestine or public activities and anyone assisting them will be subject to legal inquiry." He also banned the carrying of guns and explosives in public without a permit. Hamas dismissed the decree, saying it was "mere ink on paper." (*AFP, DPA*)

Hamas was ready to accept the formation of a Palestinian Government headed by an independent figure in order to end the current crisis, a high-ranking source in Hamas told *Ma'an*. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Quartet representatives, EU envoy Marc Otte, Russia's envoy Sergei Yakovlev, UN Special Coordinator Michael Williams and US Assistant Secretary David Welch met for more than two hours behind closed doors at the US Consulate in Jerusalem. A senior US official said that outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair would be named the following day as special envoy for the Quartet with a portfolio focused on Palestinian economic and political reform. (*AFP, AP*)

Russia's President Vladimir Putin expressed his hope, during a phone conversation with outgoing UK Prime Minister Blair, that Mr. Blair's valuable experience in domestic and foreign affairs would prove effective in helping solve pressing international problems. (*www.kremlin.ru*)

Israel indicated that it might accept a Russian proposal to supply military hardware to Palestinian security forces loyal to PA President Abbas. Russia had first offered to supply Palestinian security forces with BRDM-2 reconnaissance vehicles and other armoured carriers in 2005. Israeli authorities rejected the offer, citing concerns that the arms might fall into the hands of extremists. "The Russian proposal is being discussed with all due seriousness," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Amira Sharon said in an interview. (*RIA Novosti*)

World Food Programme spokesperson Christiane Berthiaume said that the number of people in the Gaza Strip relying on food handouts had increased from some 275,000 to at least 377,000 since Hamas seized control there two weeks ago. (*AP*)

EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel called on Israel to reopen the border with the Gaza Strip. "In the current situation, there is a real risk that Gaza will begin to look like a citadel under siege, where the civilian population is trapped and even basic needs cannot be met," he warned. "There are no grounds for a blockade of humanitarian aid. This must continue to be provided to the people in Gaza in the same way as for vulnerable groups in the West Bank - and in other crisis zones." (*AFP*)

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said: "On 26 and 27 June, [Foreign Minister] Sergey Lavrov is planning to visit Israel and the centre of the Palestinian territories, Ramallah... the top priority at this stage is to help end the fratricidal conflict and restore Palestinian unity, the possibility for which lies in a political dialogue oriented on the Quartet principles and the Mecca agreement and in the renunciation by all concerned parties of steps leading to an even greater confrontation and chaos." (*www.mid.ru*)

The International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information, [opened](#) in Tokyo. A [message](#) by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyotaka Akasaka. (*UN News Centre, SG/SM/11060-PAL/2083-PI/1786*)

27

IDF tanks and troops pushed into the Gaza Strip, exchanging fire with Palestinian gunmen. Israeli fire struck a Gaza City house, killing four people, including a 12-year-old boy, medics said. Three militants were killed in a separate incident in a nearby part of Gaza City, Palestinians said. In southern Gaza, an Islamic Jihad militant was killed in a clash with Israeli troops in Khan Yunis, a Hamas militant was killed while mishandling explosives and a senior Islamic Jihad commander was killed in what Palestinians said was an air strike. The IDF said two of their soldiers had been wounded when their tank was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. Palestinian hospital officials said a total of 40 people had been wounded by Israeli fire. Up to 200 Palestinians had been arrested by the IDF, witnesses said. (*AP, Xinhua*)

The IDF killed at least 12 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including a 12-year-old boy, and wounded another 43. (*AP, The Jerusalem Post, Xinhua*)

A Qassam rocket hit the western Negev, causing no damage or injuries. Islamic Jihad had claimed responsibility, *Israel Radio* reported. (*Ha'aretz*)

IDF troops and Border Police wounded and captured three Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants near Jenin. In the Balata refugee camp, east of Nablus, dozens of Israeli military vehicles entered the camp and clashes erupted with militants. No casualties were reported from either side. The IDF arrested two Fatah activists in Ramallah, one Islamic Jihad activist in Jenin and another Palestinian in Hebron. (*Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) crossing used to bring in humanitarian assistance into the Gaza Strip had been closed for two days, Israeli officials said, owing to attempts by Palestinian militants to carry out attacks against the facilities, including shootings and mortar attacks. A large explosive device had been uncovered close to Kerem Shalom. The Sufa crossing was still functioning, they said. However intelligence reports have warned that it was also a possible target and it was uncertain how much longer it would remain open. (*Ha'aretz*)

"We strongly condemn all these criminal acts against our people in the Gaza Strip and West Bank," PA President Abbas said while meeting visiting Russian Foreign

Minister Sergey Lavrov. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called the Israeli incursion into Gaza part of a "conspiracy in which Abbas is a participant and which is aimed at pressuring Hamas and the people of Gaza." Fatah spokesman Jamal Nazzal condemned the Israeli raid, accusing Israel of using Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip to try to justify aggression against Palestinian civilians. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

In a [statement](#), the Quartet announced the appointment of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as Quartet Representative. As the Quartet Representative, he would "mobilize international assistance to the Palestinians, working closely with donors and existing coordination bodies; help to identify and secure appropriate international support in addressing the institutional governance needs of the Palestinian State, focusing as a matter of urgency on the rule of law; develop plans to promote Palestinian economic development, including private sector partnerships, building on previously agreed frameworks, especially concerning access and movement; and liaise with other countries, as appropriate, in support of the agreed Quartet objectives." (UN press release SG/2129-PAL/2085, www.consilium.europa.eu, www.in.mid.ru, www.state.gov)

The Israeli Prime Minister's office issued a statement welcoming the appointment of Tony Blair as the Quartet Representative. "Israel will provide Mr. Blair with all necessary assistance in order for him to carry out his duties and to aid the Palestinians," the statement said. (Ha'aretz)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued a [statement](#) welcoming Tony Blair's appointment as the Quartet Representative. (www.state.gov)

The absolute priority in the Middle East is to seek a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, outgoing UK Prime Minister Blair told Parliament. That meant a secure Israel and a Palestinian State "that is not merely viable in terms of its territory but in terms of its institutions and governance," he said. "I believe it is possible to do that but it will require a huge intensity of focus and work." (Reuters)

In a letter to Ismail Haniyeh, Acting PLC Speaker Ahmad Bahar stated that "Haniyeh's Government is considered [to have] resigned, but it must continue its duties as a transitional Government until a new Government is formed with the approval of the PLC." He added that "the PLC will not recognize any Government that is not formed according to the law and any such Government will be considered a coup Government." (Ma'an News Agency)

The Russian Foreign Ministry released a [statement](#) on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's working visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 26 and 27 June. During a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Minister Livni, "The importance was emphasized of concerted efforts, aimed at preventing an escalation in the present crisis and preparing conditions for the resumption of negotiation contacts in the interest of normalizing Palestinian-Israeli relations and promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict on an internationally recognized basis," according to the statement. During a meeting with PA President Abbas in Ramallah, Mr. Lavrov "backed the efforts of Abbas, directed at normalizing the situation and restoring order in the Palestinian territories under existing constitutional procedures and with respect for the Palestinians' democratic gains" and "accentuated the importance of inter-Palestinian consensus in the interest of preserving the prospects for accomplishing the main task, that of achieving a Palestinian-Israeli settlement whose ultimate aim will be to establish an independent, viable and territorially integral Palestinian State." (www.in.mid.ru)

Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that the seizure of power by Hamas in the Gaza Strip should not be allowed to lead to a permanent division in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Mr. Steinmeier said there was no alternative to the emergency Government set up by PA President Abbas. (DPA)

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a [statement](#) saying, "Australia will provide \$4 million to support the emergency Palestinian Government and a further \$3 million in humanitarian funding for refugees in Gaza and Lebanon. ... Australia supports Palestinian Authority President Abbas' decision to form an emergency Government with Mr. Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister following the violent Hamas takeover of Gaza." (www.dfat.gov.au)

Gershon Baskin, who had been serving as IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit family's liaison to Hamas, said that Ahmed Yusef, former Prime Minister Haniyeh's political adviser, had told him that "Israel should present a new list, of about 1,000 names, and Hamas will choose the prisoners [to be released] from it according to the number agreed on in the previous negotiations." (Ha'aretz)

28

Israeli troops raided downtown Nablus, imposing a curfew that confined tens of thousands of people to their homes. Eight Israeli soldiers were moderately injured by explosive devices, Israeli sources reported. IDF troops shot a Palestinian youth in the leg after he threw a Molotov cocktail at an IDF patrol during the operation. According to a Palestinian report, seven Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets and eight were arrested. "This aggression undermines our efforts to provide security and end to chaos", PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said at a press conference in Ramallah. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's spokeswoman Miri Eisin said that the Government was committed to working with Mr. Abbas, but would not risk the safety of its own citizens. "Israel will always fight always fight terror ... We will go forward with full strength to strengthen President Abbas, and full strength to stop the terror", she said. (AP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces stormed the village of Qalqas, south of Hebron, and arrested 60 Palestinians, including 18 children. Israeli forces also arrested four Palestinians in Ramallah, one in Bethlehem and another in Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, affiliated with Hamas, said that they had launched four mortar projectiles at an Israeli military post at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said that they had fired two projectiles at an Israeli army base at the Erez crossing and at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. (Ma'an News Agency)

Acting PA Minister of Health Dr. Basim Na'im condemned Israeli military attacks against hospitals in Nablus City. He said that the Israeli army over the past two days had surrounded several medical centres and targeted ambulances while in emergency. Soldiers detained dozens of medics and physicians who were trying to provide first aid to patients. (International Middle East Media Center)

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that the movement was ready to facilitate the opening of the Gaza crossing points without pledging to change the forms of resistance against Israel. "The movement is committed to all kinds of resistance to protect the Palestinian people from the occupation and aggression", Mr. Abu Zuhri told reporters. His remarks came after *Israel Radio* reported that Hamas asked Israel to open the terminals in and out of the Gaza Strip while Hamas would stop all kinds of resistance in return. Mr. Abu Zuhri added that Hamas "can secure the safety at the crossings and provide all facilities needed to reopen them". (Xinhua)

Secretary-General of the Islamic Jihad Ramadan Shallah held intensive talks with Egyptian officials in Cairo during the past days. Mr. Shallah told *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* that the Egyptians officials had asked him to meet PA President Abbas or contact him to persuade him to return to dialogue. He also said that the Egyptian request expressed "a more hard line stance of Fatah". *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* reported that Mr. Shallah had made contact while in Cairo with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal and other movement leaders. Palestinian representative to Egypt Mundhir al-Dajjani said that President Abbas would not resume dialogue with Hamas and would not give Fatah his approval for a dialogue with Hamas while it was in control of the Gaza Strip. (BBC)

Israel opened part of the Al Muntar (Kam) crossing for the first time since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, UN and Israeli official said. Maj. Peter Lerner, who is part of the Israeli force stationed at the Kam crossing, said wheat had been transferred to the Palestinian side through a small part of the crossing. The wheat, weighing 5,000 tons, would be processed in mills in Gaza and then bought by the UNRWA to be distributed to some 860,000 Gazans. "This is an important development for us at UNRWA because all of our materials come through Kam. We hope that this development today will lead to the permanent opening of Kam", said UNRWA spokesman Christopher Gunness. (Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency)

A Saudi-Palestinian summit planned in Amman had been postponed until mid-July, a Palestinian official said. (DPA)

Oleg Ozerov, deputy head of the Middle East Directorate of the Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, said that Russia intended to keep up its contacts with Hamas, rejecting Western calls to isolate the group after its takeover of the Gaza Strip. "The 'divide and conquer policy' is not helping to solve the conflict. ... If there is any solution to the conflict at all, it is in a dialogue between the two leading Palestinian forces," Mr. Ozerov told a news conference. "We recognize President Abbas and the Government he has formed. ... But we cannot ignore the fact that more than half of the seats in the legitimately elected Parliament belong to Hamas," he added. (Reuters)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad welcomed the appointment of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as Quartet Representative. "We welcome his appointment and look forward to working with him", Mr. Fayyad said. Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said Mr. Blair would be an asset to the Palestinian attempts to

establish an independent State alongside Israel. "Mr. Blair's expertise and knowledge about the situation will enable him to help us in terms of economic development, institution-building and good Government ... His commitment to a two-State solution is genuine and sincere", Mr. Erakat said. (AP)
German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Tony Blair's mandate as the new Quartet Representative would be limited and that he would report to the Quartet and not the other way round. "The whole Quartet ... agreed to Tony Blair becoming the Quartet envoy. ... Tony Blair is a man with great political experience and I believe that in working with the Quartet he can make a meaningful and important contribution if he brings that experience to bear in trying to solve the Middle East conflict. But the political burden here will remain on the shoulders of the Quartet," she told reporters after talks in Berlin with new French Prime Minister François Fillon. (AFP)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed annoyance at a "lack of consultation" with Quartet members before the appointment of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as Special Middle East Peace Envoy. (DPA)

Special Middle East Envoy Tony Blair said in an interview that he would begin his new job immediately and probably would travel to the region next month. He said that his work would consist of preparing the ground for a future Palestinian State. (The Jerusalem Post)

The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs [announced](#) that Sweden would contribute SKr 20 million [\$2.9 million] to support wage payments to Palestinian employees within the civilian public sector, such as schools and health services. "The humanitarian and political situation in the Palestinian territories is very serious. The Palestinian Authority is in risk of collapse, along with essential social services, such as health care and education. This would have devastating consequences for the Palestinian people. We must therefore do what we can to strengthen the position of the democratically elected President Abbas, promote Palestinian unity and avoid isolation of Gaza," said Minister for International Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson. (AFP, www.sweden.gov.se)

Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs Avigdor Lieberman discussed deploying NATO forces in the Gaza Strip in a meeting with NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alessandro Minuto Rizzo in Brussels. (Ynetnews)

29

Israeli troops shot and killed an armed Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades member, Hitam Saleh, 28, in the Balata refugee camp near Nablus during a search operation for wanted militants, weapons and ammunition. The army said soldiers had seen two armed men entering a taxi, followed the vehicle, then opened fire at one of the gunmen, who jumped out of the vehicle. (AP, Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces arrested three "wanted" Palestinians in Nablus City. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas told a meeting of the Socialist International in Geneva that Hamas had committed "crimes, murder and aggression against everything Palestinians stand for" in its takeover of the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Government was "determined to isolate the coup d'état, delegitimize all militias and to enforce law and order over all parts of the Palestinian territory," Mr. Abbas said. (AP)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana was quoted by the Spanish daily *El País* as saying that Quartet Representative Tony Blair would not conduct a peace process and his task would be to mobilize political and economic aid, "will and solidarity" to create a government structure for a Palestinian State. (DPA)

30

Seven Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip in three Israeli air strikes. Three Islamic Jihad members identified as Raed and Ziad Ghannam and Mohamed al-Rai were killed in the first airstrike on a car travelling in Khan Yunis. An IDF statement said the militants had been planning a suicide bombing and had been involved in previous suicide attacks against Israel. It also linked them to the 2004 infiltration of a military post in Gaza in which one Israeli civilian was killed. Abu Ahmed, an Islamic Jihad spokesman, vowed retaliation, saying Ziad Ghannam was the group's top leader in the southern Gaza Strip. Five bystanders were wounded in the attack. The second attack hit a weapons factory in the Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, killing four members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, including a father and a son. Abu Thaer, a spokesman for the Brigades, said the father, Salah Quffa, 50, had been head of the group's central Gaza operations.

The Brigades and Islamic Jihad gunmen broke through Gaza's border in early June in a failed attempt to abduct an Israeli soldier, and Abu Thaer said Israel had targeted men involved in that operation. Witnesses quoted by *Reuters* said Mr. Quffa had been the local commander of a rocket production crew. The IDF confirmed an airstrike at the site, saying it went after Islamic Jihad militants involved in previous attacks on Israel. Aircraft fired missiles at the same place shortly after, injuring a civilian and four Executive Force members guarding the area after the weapons factory was attacked. The IDF said it had gone after an Islamic Jihad arms warehouse. Hamas had no immediate comment. (AP, Reuters, Xinhua)

Around the time of the second Israeli strike, two rockets fired from the Gaza Strip struck the southern Israeli town of Sderot, the IDF said. No injuries were reported.

Earlier in the day, a rocket landed short of Israel, falling in Palestinian territory. (AP)

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) declared PA Prime Minister Fayyad to be "a target" after he said his Government would have to work with Israel to bring armed factions in the West Bank under control. "Whoever makes these statements is a collaborator," said Abu Mujahid, a PRC spokesman. "He will be a target of the resistance." (AP)

In Paris, PA President Abbas held talks with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who expressed France's "full support" for the PA and pledged €15 million (\$20 million) in aid. "I proposed an international force in Gaza" to Mr. Sarkozy to ensure the elections could be held peacefully, Mr. Abbas said, adding, "Elections necessitate a certain stability in security." French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, at a news conference with Mr. Abbas after the meeting, said, "An international force cannot replace the peace process." Mr. Kouchner urged a renewal of broader Middle East peace efforts, saying, "Our Israeli friends and our Palestinian friends can count on France." (AP)

Hamas rejected PA President Abbas' call for the deployment of international troops in Gaza, vowing to attack them like other "occupation forces". "An international force is not acceptable to us," said Ismail Haniyeh, former PA Prime Minister dismissed by Mr. Abbas. "We in Gaza and the Palestinian territories are under occupation and we don't need any more forces to pressure the Palestinian people," Mr. Haniyeh said during a tour of the house of the late Yasser Arafat.

Hamas' armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, threatened to attack international troops. "We will not allow any foreign forces to set foot in the Gaza Strip and we will deal with them as occupation forces," the Brigades said, adding that it believed Mr. Abbas only supported the deployment of international troops to undercut the group's control over the Gaza Strip. (AP, Reuters)

Two Palestinian factions based in Damascus rejected a call by PA President Abbas for the deployment of an international force to the Gaza Strip. Anwar Raja, the press officer of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), said sending international forces into Gaza served Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's "programme to isolate the Gaza Strip from other Palestinian territories." Mr. Raja added that that call aimed at isolating Hamas and helped undermine the Palestinian cause. He said his group would see any international force as "an occupation force (that would) become a legitimate target for resistance guns." The PFLP expressed dismay at Mr. Abbas' call, saying in a statement it was "unnecessary and will create more troubles and internal tensions" and stressing that the top priority was to "initiate a comprehensive national dialogue in participation of all Palestinians factions as the only solution" for the current crisis. (DPA)

During the visit to the house of Yasser Arafat in the Gaza Strip, Ismail Haniyeh placed a phone call and his aides said it was to Arafat's widow Suha, in Tunisia. "I will send a video of my tour for you to be sure the house is safe and under protection," Mr. Haniyeh said on the phone, with reporters watching. "The house of Abu Ammar is one of the national symbols in Gaza ... and will remain under protection." Fatah spokesman Ahmed Abdel Rahman alleged that on 17 June, two days after Hamas took control of Gaza, Hamas gunmen had broken into the house, stepped on Arafat's photo and his military fatigues and damaged gifts from world leaders and the Nobel Peace Prize. In the upstairs bedrooms, the gunmen stole women's clothing, the statement said at the time. (AP)

"Nothing should affect inter-Palestinian dialogue," Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Amre Moussa said, adding that unifying Palestinian ranks should be the top priority. Mr. Moussa noted that an Arab fact-finding commission entrusted with looking into recent events in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was pursuing its mission and holding contacts with various parties. A report would be prepared soon by the commission in accordance with a resolution of the emergency meeting of the Arab League Council, he added. (Xinhua)