

Division for Palestinian Rights

***Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
Question of Palestine***
Monthly media monitoring review
June 2010

Monthly highlights

- Security Council condemns acts resulting in loss of life and injuries during Israel's attack on Gaza aid flotilla ([1 June](#))
- Human Rights Council decides to dispatch fact-finding mission to probe the flotilla attack ([2 June](#))
- UN Secretary-General proposes an international panel to investigate the Gaza aid flotilla incident ([6 June](#))
- Egyptian security official says Gaza border to be open indefinitely ([7 June](#))
- PA postpones local elections in the West Bank ([10 June](#))
- Arab League Secretary-General visits Gaza ([13 June](#))
- Israel appoints committee to inquire into the Gaza aid flotilla raid ([14 June](#))
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights announces members of a panel to monitor Israeli and Palestinian follow-up to Goldstone report ([14 June](#))
- Quartet welcomes Israel's decision to ease Gaza blockade ([21 June](#))
- 22 Palestinian homes in Jerusalem to be demolished for a tourist centre ([21 June](#))
- Masked gunmen set fire to UNRWA children's summer camp in Gaza ([28 June](#))

I

The IDF said that it had killed two Gaza militants after they had crossed the border into Israel and exchanged fire with troops. Israeli police said roadblocks had been set up inside Israel after the reported infiltration from Gaza. *Israel Radio* reported that schoolchildren in the area had been ordered to remain inside. (AP)

An Israeli air strike killed three Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip near the town of Beit Lahia, Gaza medics confirmed. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF discovered a pipe bomb planted on the separation wall near Qalqilya. (www.idf.il)

A 65-year-old Palestinian woman was shot in the legs near the Kerem Shalom crossing. The IDF said the fire that had injured the woman was not from Israeli forces. (Ma'an News Agency)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu left Canada for Israel following the naval attack on the Gaza flotilla. He spoke to US President Barack Obama, cancelling their scheduled meeting in Washington. (www.whitehouse.gov)

Richard Burden, British MP and Chair of the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group, demanded that Israel be held to account for its appalling attack on the Gaza aid flotilla, and said that he would table a parliamentary motion, calling for a full investigation and an end to the blockade of Gaza. (Wafa)

In a late night vote, Israel's security cabinet decided to deport, within 48 hours, all the 682 people who had been on board the aid flotilla bound for Gaza. Turkey's Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, told the press: "If our citizens are not released in 24 hours, by tonight in other words, we will review our ties with Israel entirely." Hours later it was reported that hundreds of activists had been deported from Israel. Meanwhile, the nine fatalities were yet to be identified, although some reports indicated that four of the nine were Turkish nationals. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

Turkey's Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, said that ties between Turkey and Israel could be restored if Israel were to lift the blockade on Gaza. At the same time, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that his Government's stance had not changed, and that the siege would not be lifted as long as Hamas continued to rule Gaza. (AP, Haaretz, IMEMC)

A court hearing resulted in the extension of the detention of four Arab Israelis who had been on board the Gaza Aid flotilla. It remained unclear

what would happen to the four activists. (*IMEMC*)

Greta Berlin, Spokesperson for the Free Gaza Movement said that a cargo boat was already on the way to challenge Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip to be joined by a second boat carrying about three dozen passengers. Ireland's Prime Minister Brian Cowen said that the ship "Rachel Corrie" should be allowed to reach Gaza with its humanitarian cargo, warning, "If any harm comes to any of our citizens it will have the most serious consequences". The cargo ship was due to arrive on 2 June. Five of those on board were Irish, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Maguire, 66, and former UN Assistant Secretary-General Denis Halliday. (*AFP, AP, The Daily Telegraph*)

Fifty of the Gaza aid flotilla passengers had been voluntarily repatriated to their home countries, while some 629 had refused to be deported and would remain in Israeli prison until the Government decided what, if any, legal action should be taken. Ireland's Foreign Minister, Micheál Martin, said Israel had failed to provide consular access, saying Ireland expected the immediate and unconditional release of all the Irish citizens detained. He said, "The seven individuals concerned did not enter Israel illegally; rather they were essentially seized from international waters, taken into Israel and asked to sign documents confirming that they entered illegally". Lebanese sources said that Israel had informed Lebanon through UNIFIL that three of the five Lebanese passengers detained after taking part in the Gaza aid flotilla were to be released. According to a statement from the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza, none of the Gaza aid flotilla passengers had been permitted to meet with lawyers. As for the situation of a handful of Palestinian citizens of Israel, they were detained in Ashkelon prison and were being interrogated. (*AFP, DPA, Haaretz, www.mezan.org*)

It was reported that the Nicaraguan Government had suspended the country's diplomatic ties with Israel in protest of Israel's deadly raid on the Gaza-bound international aid flotilla. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

The Red Cross issued a [statement](#) strongly deploring the loss of civilian lives in the Israeli raid on the aid flotilla and questioning the Israeli methods used in boarding the ships. (*www.icrc.org*)

A Palestinian from Beersheba was deported to Gaza under Israeli Military Order 1650, the Wa'ed Prisoners Society reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Security Council, at the end of a 12-hour emergency meeting, agreed on a [presidential statement](#) condemning acts during Israel's naval attack on the Gaza flotilla, which resulted in the loss of at least 10 civilians and many wounded. The Council requested the immediate release of all ships and civilians held by Israel, calling for an impartial investigation of the attack. It urged Israel to permit full consular access, allowing the countries concerned to retrieve their deceased and wounded immediately, and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance from the convoy to Gaza.

(*UN News Centre*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for the immediate release of those detained by Israel following the raid on the Gaza aid flotilla. (*UN News Centre*)

The Human Rights Council decided to hold an urgent meeting on the raid on the Gaza aid flotilla. A draft resolution was tabled in the morning by Pakistan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Sudan, on behalf of the Arab Group and by Palestine. (*www.unog.ch*)

During the urgent meeting of the Human Rights Council, Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang, expressed shock "that humanitarian aid would be met with such violence", and unequivocally condemned "what appears to be a disproportionate use of force". She also called for an end to the blockade on Gaza and for respect of international law. (*UN News Centre*)

Morocco's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ambassador Omar Hilale, speaking at a meeting in the Human Rights Council, stressed the need for Israel to end the "inhumane and appalling blockade imposed on Gaza". (*MENA*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khaled Mashaal, called upon all States to cut diplomatic ties with Israel and urged Moscow and Washington to make Israel end its blockade of Gaza. He added, "We say clearly we cannot allow Israel to escape from punishment. What the Security Council did today, under the shadow of a US veto, pressure and bias, is a betrayal of humanity and not just of the people of Gaza and the supporters".

(*Reuters*)

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Speaking at the opening of an investment conference in [Bethlehem], PA President Mahmoud Abbas said: "My message to Obama during our meeting in Washington next week will be that we need bold decisions to change the face of the region." (*AFP*)

Residents of the "Yizhar" settlement set fire to more than 100 dunums of Palestinian lands near the village of Urif, south-west of Nablus, a Palestinian official said. Hundreds of almond and olive trees had reportedly been destroyed. Subsequently, clashes between the settlers and Palestinians had erupted, and Israeli forces had used tear gas to disperse the fight. (*Ma'an News Agency, www.idf.il*)

PA President Abbas, following an emergency meeting with Fatah leaders, issued a communiqué demanding an end to the blockade of Gaza and calling upon the EU to freeze relations with Israel. However, Mr. Abbas also rejected calls to withdraw from indirect peace talks with Israel. (*The Daily Telegraph*)

Quartet Envoy Tony Blair called upon Israel to end its embargo on the Gaza Strip. "The policy ... is counterproductive and what [Israel] should be doing is allow material in to rebuild homes and sanitation and power and water systems and allow business to flourish," Mr. Blair told *Reuters* in an interview in Bethlehem. (*Reuters*)

PA President Abbas met with US special envoy George Mitchell and asked him to form a panel to investigate the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu accused his nation's critics of an "international offensive of hypocrisy," as the growing diplomatic crisis over the raid on a flotilla of pro-Palestinian activists threatened to deepen Israel's isolation from much of the rest of the world. (*The Wall Street Journal*)

UK Foreign Minister, William Hague, while calling for "a full and impartial and independent investigation" into the events, demanded that the 41 British nationals detained in Israel be returned home "very quickly". (*The Daily Telegraph*)

Following an offer by Jordan to secure the repatriation and extension of medical treatment to those injured in the Israeli attack, 126 Gaza flotilla activists who had been detained by Israel, including 30 Jordanians, were due to cross the King Hussein Bridge today into Jordan, officials said. (*The Jordan Times*)

Ten Indonesian nationals were reported to be among those who had entered Jordan from Israel early this morning. Meanwhile, Indonesia's President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, appealed for assistance in connection with two Indonesians hospitalized in Israel with gunshot wounds, since Indonesia did not have diplomatic ties with Israel. (*AP*)

France's Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, characterized Israel's raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla as "a very grave mistake", which was "extremely

damaging to the image of Israel itself". Urging the parties to continue indirect talks, he also called for an independent international investigation into the raid, adding that there could be no impunity. The Government of Argentina was also reported to have condemned the attack. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *Wafa*)

The OIC was to hold an emergency meeting, at the level of foreign ministers, on 6 June, focusing on the consequences of Israel's attack on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla. (*DPA*)

Expressing concern about the "dramatic consequences" of the clash on board the Gaza aid flotilla for Middle East peace prospects, Pope Benedict XVI said that such tragic events would only generate more violence and urged dialogue. (*AP*, *DPA*)

US Vice-President Joe Biden defended Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip and its decision to intercept the aid flotilla, though he did not go so far as to defend the Israel navy raid. (*Haaretz*)

Oxfam International issued a [statement](#) condemning the Israeli raid on the Gaza aid flotilla. (*Wafa* , www.oxfam.org)

The head of the Brussels-based European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, Arafat Madhi, said that funding had been secured to send three new aid ships to Gaza, in what would be called "Freedom Flotilla 2". The ships would be able to leave the ports of Turkey in a few weeks, officials said.

(*IMEMC* , *Ma'an News Agency*)

Following the Israeli raid on the Gaza aid flotilla, Egypt decided to ease restrictions on the Rafah crossing, where some 300 Palestinians were allowed to cross and humanitarian aid was brought into Gaza. A security official said that only food and medical supplies would go in. "Hard materials", including concrete and steel, would have to go through Israel, he added. Hamas welcomed the opening of the Rafah crossing and called for the easing of restrictions to be made permanent. (*AFP* , *Haaretz* , *Ma'an News Agency* , *Reuters*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [demanded](#) that Israel immediately lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip and indicated he may eventually launch his own probe of the deadly commando raid on the activists' aid flotilla. "This tragedy only highlights the serious underlying problem," he told reporters. "The long-running closure imposed on the Gaza Strip is counterproductive, unsustainable and wrong. It punishes innocent civilians. It must be lifted by the Israeli authorities immediately." (www.un.org , *AP*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon late during the day issued an urgent [appeal](#) to prevent another violent incident off the Gaza Strip coast, seeking to defuse an escalating situation, amid confirmation that another ship would be headed to Gaza. (www.un.org , *DPA*)

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, expressed deep concern at the deadly Israeli raid on the Gaza aid flotilla and stressed the need for a full investigation. (www.unesco.org)

The Human Rights Council [adopted a resolution](#), inter alia , condemning in the strongest terms the Israeli attack on the aid flotilla, calling upon Israel to release those detained, and deciding to dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law resulting from the Israeli attack. (www.unog.ch)

Concluding a two-day conference on [Advancing Women's Leadership for Sustainable Peace in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Worldwide](#), which had brought together government leaders and nearly 100 experts on women's human and political rights and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace (IWC) reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their joint action to call for concerted action to end the occupation and achieve a two-State solution based on the 4 June 1967 borders. The conference was supported by the Government of Spain and hosted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the IWC, a commission that brings together Israeli, Palestinian and international women leaders to speak with one voice for a just and sustainable resolution of the conflict.

(www.unifem.org)

3

Four Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel. Three rockets landed in open areas in the Western Negev region and one landed inside the Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman suggested that Israel may consider partially lifting the Gaza blockade if Hamas agreed to monthly Red Cross visits to captured soldier Gilad Shalit. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel, deflecting a UN demand for an international investigation, today proposed an Israeli inquiry with the participation of outside observers, into its lethal seizure of a Gaza-bound Turkish ship. (*Reuters*)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for representatives of the Quartet to be included in an investigation of Israel's raid on the Gaza aid flotilla. (*AP*)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell warned today that the Gaza flotilla tragedy should not be allowed to undermine the peace process. "The tragedy... cannot be allowed to spiral out of control and undermine the limited but real progress that has been made," he said. (*AFP*)

The Arab League said today that it would file a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice over Israel's attack on the Gaza-bound aid convoy. (*Xinhua*)

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were reported to be resisting efforts to deliver truckloads of goods seized from the flotilla. Hamas officials had been quoted as saying that they were refusing to accept the goods until all of the detainees had been freed. (*The New York Times*)

Turkish planes carrying hundreds of activists from the Gaza-bound aid flotilla have arrived in Istanbul from Israel. The activists returned to an enthusiastic welcome led by Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister, Bulent Arinc. Thirty-five Greek activists and four Lebanese citizens have also been able to return home. (*BBC* , *AP*)

Eight of the nine people killed in the Israeli raid on an aid flotilla have been identified as Turks, Turkish media outlets reported. The other victim was an American of Turkish origin, according to the reports. (*DPA*)

The head of the Turkish charity group, Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or IHH, which worked to organize the flotilla, said that the beating of some Israeli soldiers with chairs and sticks had been acts of self-defence. Bulent Yildirim, who had been deported from Israel, along with hundreds of activists, said activists had also seized weapons of some Israeli soldiers but had thrown them into the sea. (*AP*)

"In view of the recent attack on the flotilla ship carrying relief aid to Gaza, South Africa's Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, in consultation with the presidency, had decided to recall its ambassador to Israel," Ministry official Malusi Mogale said. (*Ynetnews*)

Ecuador recalled its ambassador in Israel for consultations, due to Israel's raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

US President Obama said in an interview that Israel had "legitimate security concerns" in Gaza but the Israeli blockade was "preventing people" from

pursuing economic opportunities. The incident regarding the flotilla was a “tragic situation” but it needed to be used “as an opportunity” to advance the Middle East peace process, he said. (CNN)

Gaza crossings activity returned to Israel’s status quo today, with minimum levels of goods set to enter the Strip via a single open crossing. (Ma’an News Agency)

Israeli media reported that Prime Minister Netanyahu could ease the blockade imposed on Gaza following international criticism of the deadly raid on an aid flotilla. Mr. Netanyahu could allow merchant ships to carry goods to the Gaza Strip but only after an inspection, public television said. The private Channel 10 television said, meanwhile, that Mr. Netanyahu could seek international help to inspect shipments heading for Gaza. (AFP)

Jerusalem police confiscated the Israeli identity cards of four Hamas members, Mohammed Abu Tir, Mohammed Totach, Khaled Abu Arafa and Ahmed Atoun, who had refused to give up their duties within the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The police gave them until July to leave the city. (Haaretz)

One Palestinian student sustained serious wounds and another was injured lightly when an Israeli settler opened fire in response to the stoning of an Israeli vehicle in Hebron. (Ynetnews)

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, issued the following statement: “I am deeply concerned at reports from Gaza that Hamas has broken into a number of NGO offices in Gaza City and Rafah in recent days and closed them down, confiscating their materials and equipment in the process.” (www.unsco.org)

4

Free Gaza Movement Spokesperson, Greta Berlin, said that the MV “Rachel Corrie” was headed directly for the Gaza Strip with hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid and was expected to reach Israel’s 20-mile exclusion zone within the next day. Despite reports that the 1,200-ton ship was heading back to Ireland due to technical difficulties, Ms. Berlin said that the ship was on schedule and had no plans to stop at any port along the way.

(Haaretz)

Turkey’s Deputy Prime Minister, Bulent Arinc, said that existing military and economic agreements with Israel were now on the table for discussion after nine Turkish nationals were killed when Israeli commandos raided the Mavi Marmara. “We may plan to reduce our relations with Israel to a minimum, but to assume everything involving another country is stopped in an instant, to say we have crossed you out of our address book is not the custom of our State,” he told NTV broadcaster in an interview. (Reuters)

Turkish media reported that Turkey planned on appealing to the International Criminal Court to launch an investigation into the Israeli raid of the Gaza aid flotilla. The Turkish Attorney-General had already begun [interviewing] the flotilla’s participants in an effort to build his case, according to the reports. (Ynetnews)

Hamas invited PA President Abbas to visit the Gaza Strip as the first step to break the Israeli siege and end Hamas-Fatah divisions. “Come to Gaza and start a Legislative Council session,” Mousa Abu Marzouq, Deputy Head of the Hamas Political Bureau, said in Damascus. (IMEMC)

As many as 343 Palestinians crossed the Rafah terminal into Gaza, with as many as 208, including patients, students and humanitarian cases, being allowed into Egypt. In the meantime, Egypt’s Gen. Sameh Essa said that the Egyptian authorities had delivered 13 electricity generators, 1,300 blankets, 107 tents as well as food and medical supplies offered by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and NGOs to the Gaza Strip via the crossing.

(Wafa)

The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories will visit Egypt from 8 to 11 June, Jordan from 11 to 16 June, and Syria from 16 to 19 June 2010. (www.ohchr.org)

5

The “Rachel Corrie” ship was taken to Ashdod under Israeli military escort. Israel said that its soldiers had boarded the Irish-owned ship from the sea and had not met any resistance. (BBC)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke by telephone with Prime Minister Erdoğan of Turkey and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel to discuss options for moving forward with the investigation called for by the Security Council presidential statement of 1 June 2010. (UN News Centre)

The OIC called for the formation of an international investigation committee to probe Israel’s deadly attack on Gaza-bound aid ships. “I have invited our OIC ambassadorial groups in both New York and Geneva to act in concert in favour of the adoption of an international stand condemning this odious crime and of lifting the lawless blockade on the Gaza Strip,” OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu said in Jeddah. (Tehran Times)

Tens of thousands protested across Europe against the killing of activists during the raid on an aid fleet. (AFP)

Two Lebanese groups, “Free Palestine Movement” and “Reporters Without Limits” launched a campaign to raise funds for a ship that they hoped could set sail from Lebanon for Gaza next week carrying educational supplies and journalists. (AFP)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said: “International humanitarian law prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and ... it is also prohibited to impose collective punishment on civilians ... I have consistently reported to Member States that the [Gaza] blockade is illegal and must be lifted.” (ITN)

6

Israel deported seven activists who had tried to sail the “Rachel Corrie” aid ship to Gaza in defiance of Israel’s blockade. They were among 11 campaigners and eight crew members who had signed deportation papers on 5 June.” (BBC)

Post mortems in Turkey revealed that 30 bullets had been found in the bodies of the killed activists from “Mavi Marmara”; one victim had four bullets in the head. (BBC)

“We are rejecting an international commission. We are discussing with the Obama Administration a way in which our inquiry will take place,” Michael Oren, Israel’s Ambassador to Washington, said on Fox News. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had suggested establishing a panel that would be headed by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and include representatives from Turkey, Israel and the United States, an Israeli official had said earlier. (Haaretz)

Ankara said it welcomed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s proposal and was waiting to hear Israel’s decision on whether to participate. “We insisted on the establishment of the commission as an independent and impartial body. The mission of the commission should be to examine the incident with all points of view and light the way for finding out the crime and the criminals,” a senior diplomatic source told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review. (Hürriyet)

Iran would be willing to send its Revolutionary Guard forces to accompany further aid ships to Gaza, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in an interview cited by Reuters. “The naval wing of the Revolutionary Guard is ready to assist the peace flotilla to Gaza with all its effort and capabilities,” Mr. Khamenei’s Revolutionary Guard Spokesman, Ali Shirazi, stated. (The Jerusalem Post)

Thousands of Moroccans marched through Rabat to protest against an Israeli raid on aid ships bound for Gaza. (Reuters)

The Syrian People’s Assembly called upon international legislative bodies and parliamentary assemblies to adopt practical stances and sanctions against Israel after its attack on the Gaza-bound international aid flotilla, SANA news agency reported. (Xinhua)

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, said that Israel's attacks on ships carrying humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip was an "opportunity" to push Israel into lifting the blockade. The blockade was "unacceptable, counterproductive [and] very damaging for the people of Gaza," he added. "And I think there is a large amount of consensus about that now outside of Israel, that this is not an appropriate policy," he stated. (AFP)

"The humanitarian situation in Gaza is both unacceptable and unsustainable," UK International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said while announcing a contribution of £19 million which would help support UNRWA schools and health clinics in Gaza. (AFP)

Hamas leader Salah Al-Bardawil welcomed a proposed EU plan to monitor Gaza crossings, and said that the movement would be glad to receive a European presence at all Gaza border crossings. "We are going to make a proposal over the next few days so that situations like the ones that happened [this week] will not be repeated," Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, told AFP, referring to the Israeli attack on a Turkish aid ship. The plan reportedly included the activation of the EU monitoring mission at Rafah, and developing similar initiatives in at least three other crossings as well as assisting in sea patrols so that the Gaza Port could be opened. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Israeli forces quelled a Palestinian demonstration against the separation wall in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. The protesters had set off for their land, confiscated by the Israeli authorities for the wall, witnesses said. The Israeli forces fired rubber bullets and tear gas grenades at the demonstration; they injured four Palestinian protesters and arrested a foreign activist. (KUNA)

PA President Abbas arrived in Turkey for talks with Turkish officials and to attend the Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. He will offer his condolences over the deaths of the nine activists. The raid would also be discussed during the conference, a Turkish official said. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post, Wafa)

Hamas had reportedly rejected a suggestion made by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman that the blockade be eased in return for monthly Red Cross visits to captured soldier Gilad Shalit. Israel Radio reported that Khalil al-Haya of Hamas had said that they feared visits would lead to Shalit's location being revealed. (The Jerusalem Post)

7

One Palestinian was injured in an Israeli air strike on the Jabalya area of northern Gaza, and a second by Israeli fire near Erez only hours after Israeli warships had shot dead four members of Fatah's armed wing off the Gaza coast. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF arrested six Palestinians in West Bank operations. (The Jerusalem Post)

A security official said that the Egyptian construction of an underground barrier on the border with the Gaza Strip would be completed by the end of the summer. "We will close all the tunnels for sure. ... It's our right, it's legitimate. We will have goods delivered to [people in Gaza] over ground. It has to happen before our eyes," the official said. (AFP)

"We think it is very important that there is a credible and transparent investigation ... there should be an international presence at minimum," said British Foreign Secretary William Hague in Paris. French President Nicolas Sarkozy also pushed Israel to accept "a credible and impartial inquiry" into the raid on the Gaza aid flotilla, his office said. (AFP)

A group of senior Israel navy officers in the reserves publicly called upon Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak to establish an independent and external commission of inquiry to investigate last week's naval operation against the Gaza aid flotilla. "We believe that the operation ended in a disaster on a military and diplomatic level," the reserve officers, who served as commanders of navy ships, wrote in the letter. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Abbas said that he would send a delegation to the Gaza Strip to seek reconciliation with Hamas after Israel's deadly aid flotilla raid. "The best answer to [the raid] ... is for Palestinian groups to reconcile and resist Israel hand in hand," Mr. Abbas told Turkey's NTV news channel. (AFP)

During a visit to Cyprus, Pope Benedict XVI called for an urgent international effort to resolve tension in the Middle East. After the mass, the Pontiff distributed a working paper ahead of a synod for Middle Eastern bishops in Rome in October, which stated: "The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is creating difficulties in everyday life, inhibiting freedom of movement, the economy and religious life." (Voice of America)

An Egyptian security official declared the blockade of Gaza a failure and said his country would keep its border with Gaza open indefinitely. (AP)

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki signed an agreement for the establishment of a joint committee that would organize the construction of schools and improvement of educational infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Turkey will also offer diplomatic and political advice under the agreement. The committee, which will be co-chaired by the two Foreign Ministers, will convene at least twice every year in order to determine areas of cooperation and lay out action plans. (www.todayzaman.com)

A Jordanian convoy of six trucks loaded with medical equipment, fuel and other items arrived at a Gaza hospital after being permitted entry through the Erez crossing. The aid had been donated by the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization. (Ma'an News Agency)

Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said that his Government was prepared to supply the Gaza Strip with "everything it needs", as he met with Syria's President Hafez al-Assad in Istanbul. "We can no longer remain silent and we will not be silent anymore regarding anything having to do with Gaza," he was quoted as saying. Mr. Assad said that Syria would "support every decision and every step that Turkey requests in order to break the blockade, including support of an international inquiry." "We are not just people who talk and issue declarations of condemnation. We are in favour of actions, and we declare that we will," Mr. Assad said. (Haaretz)

"We are consulting closely with Egypt, as well as our other partners, on new ways to address the humanitarian, economic, security, and political aspects of the situation in Gaza," US Vice-President Joseph Biden said after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. (Ynetnews)

The UAE Red Crescent Authority had completed construction of 55 out of 100 housing units of a housing project for the poor financed by the UAE relief agency and executed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the West Bank. (Wafa)

More than a dozen Israeli police were seen taking photos and film footage of Palestinian homes in the Al-Bustan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, sparking fears that Israeli officials planned to enact a mass demolition plan in the coming weeks. (Ma'an News Agency)

The European Union made its sixth contribution this year to the PA payment of its civil service salaries and pensions, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This was part of a €158 million support package to be paid out in the course of 2010 through the PEGASE mechanism. (Wafa)

"It is terrible to say this but I hope that the tragedy could be a turning point, a watershed in terms of the blockade. I hope that world leaders, those who make decisions, open their eyes to the suffering of the Palestinians. The blockade of Gaza is now almost longer than the blockade of Sarajevo," said UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi. (www.unrwa.org)

"If Israel ... gives the green light for the establishment of an international [inquiry] commission and is ready to answer to the commission, then naturally Turkish-Israeli ties will follow a different path," Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told reporters. "But if it continues to evade that, normalization in relations would be out of the question," he said. (AFP)

At the American University in Beirut, Hina Jilani, one of the authors of the Goldstone Report alongside Col. Desmond Travers, spoke to an audience denouncing what they called "the deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure" which had taken place during operation "Cast Lead".

She said: "I was absolutely traumatized by what I saw in Gaza," adding that there was a chronic and unprecedented disregard for human dignity.

Speaking about “the systemic nature of destruction” Mr. Travers, a veteran peacekeeper, described the “a-symmetrical” and “vastly disproportional use of force” employed by the Israeli army. (*The Daily Star*)

Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, told a final news conference, after six years in the post: “I certainly regret the fact that the [Human Rights] Council itself has developed such a single-minded focus on violations in just one particular area [OPT] while doing so little in almost any other area”. (*Reuters*)

8

The bodies of two more Palestinians, whom the Israeli navy had shot at sea the previous day, washed up on the Gaza Strip’s shore, bringing the death toll from the incident to six. (*The Washington Post*)

Israeli forces detained six Palestinians, including two teenagers, in Hebron-area villages. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

Egyptian officials said that US military experts installing a network of tunnel detection equipment along the Gaza-Egypt border had left the area ahead of schedule following the opening of the Rafah crossing by Egypt. Two main monitoring compartments and 18 subsidiary compartments had been installed along the border every 600 metres, officials said, which would detect movement underground. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

The IDF announced that it would conduct an internal military investigation into the Israel navy’s deadly raid of a humanitarian aid convoy bound for the Gaza Strip. IDF Chief of Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, had appointed General [res.] Giora Eiland to head the investigation team, which is due to report its findings to the General Staff by 4 July. (*Haaretz*)

US State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley [said](#): “International participation in investigating these matters will be important to the credibility that everybody wants to see,” adding, “We are discussing with Israel and others the prospective nature of international participation in the investigation. And we’re sharing different ideas on how to best accomplish that”. He said that the US wanted to see an impartial, credible, prompt, thorough investigation, recognizing that international participation would be an essential element to putting this “tragedy behind us”. (www.state.gov)

Speaking at a news conference with Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan in Istanbul, Russian Federation Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, condemned Israel’s [raid](#) on the Gaza aid flotilla, saying, “These actions in international waters are especially concerning, and undoubtedly require a thorough investigation”. (*AP*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair told Israel’s *Channel 10* that when it comes to security, Israel had a right to inspect what went into Gaza. He said any investigation into Israel’s raid on the Gaza aid flotilla had to be “full and impartial” and that Israel had the right to defend itself. (*Haaretz*)

It was reported that Israel was poised to accept a British plan to ease its blockade of Gaza in exchange for international acceptance of a watered-down investigation into last week’s deadly raid against the Gaza aid flotilla. (*Telegraph.co.uk*)

A French lawyer, Lillian Glock, filed two lawsuits against the State of Israel in France over the Gaza flotilla raid on behalf of the French Committee of Charity and Relief for Palestinians. The six people who run the charity had been aboard the Freedom Flotilla. (*IMEMC*)

Al-Quds Al-Arabi reported that Syrian President Assad had proposed a new initiative to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan aimed at having the blockade of the Gaza Strip lifted once and for all. Syrian sources told the newspaper that the initiative included a number of ideas for regional and international activity, and Qatar was slated to take part in the initiative’s implementation. (*Ynetnews*)

Border security officials said that more than 5,000 Palestinians had crossed the border between Gaza and Egypt since Egyptian President Mubarak ordered it opened eight days ago. People with documents granting them entry into Egypt or other Arab countries had been allowed to leave Gaza, while Palestinian patients who had received medical treatment in Egypt had been allowed to return to Gaza. Tons of medical supplies, food and other aid items had also been driven into Gaza. (*DPA*)

Israeli bulldozers uprooted more than 80 olive trees, as well as cypress trees over 700 years old, in Al-Walaja village, south of Jerusalem, in preparation for the future construction of the separation wall. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

The Israeli army delivered eviction orders to five Palestinian families in two Tubas-area villages in the Jordan Valley, giving them 10 days to evacuate their land, which had been declared a “closed military zone”. The move would make more than 50 Palestinians homeless and deprive them of livelihoods. (*Ma’an News Agency*)

9

Supported by six tanks and three bulldozers, the IDF entered into Al-Qarara in southern Gaza. The tanks opened heavy fire towards Palestinian houses, while bulldozers levelled farmlands, Palestinian sources said. (*KUNA*)

An explosive device was detonated near the fence between southern Gaza and Israel, damaging an Israeli tank. The Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for the attack. (*Ma’an News Agency*, www.idf.il)

After meeting with PA President Abbas at the White House, US President Obama said that the situation in Gaza was “unsustainable” and that a better approach was needed in the Strip. Mr. Obama predicted “real progress” in the coming months in US efforts to take the Israelis and Palestinians towards direct peace talks, noting that both sides wanted a peaceful solution. The US President called upon Israel to work with all parties to find a solution for Gaza and said that the US was providing \$400 million in new aid for the Palestinians. (*Ynetnews*, www.whitehouse.gov)

Speaking to leaders of the American Jewish community in Washington, PA President Abbas said that he would never deny Jews their right to the land of Israel. He also recalled his past proposal for a trilateral commission to monitor and punish incitement, to which Israel had not agreed. (*Haaretz*)

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv denied in a statement a report in *The Daily Telegraph* of a British plan whereby Israel would ease the Gaza siege in exchange for decreased world pressure for an international probe into the events of the Gaza flotilla. “We don’t know where the idea of a *quid pro quo* came from ... the Foreign Secretary has made clear that the current restrictions on Gaza must be lifted in line with UNSCR 1860 (2009),” the statement read. (*Haaretz*)

Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel’s inquiry into its raid on the Gaza aid flotilla would examine how “extremists” were able to board the convoy, as well as the actions of Israel’s military and Government. He said: “I want the whole truth to come to light,” adding, “We have to establish who stood behind this extremist group, who financed its members, and how knives, axes and other weapons were brought aboard”. Mr. Netanyahu added that Israel was still in consultation with the United States and other international actors over the form an inquiry would take, emphasizing that only the military would have the right to question commandos who had taken part in the raid. (*Haaretz*)

After a meeting in Berlin, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle and his Italian counterpart, Franco Frattini, called for an international inquiry into the Israeli raid on an aid convoy heading to Gaza. They suggested that the Quartet participate in order to achieve “a transparent and impartial” investigation. France and Britain were also reported to call upon Israel to accept an international investigation into the incident, while Israeli officials said that they were consulting with the US and other countries on the form of an investigation. (*The Palestine Telegraph*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu indicated his willingness to appear before an investigation into the Israeli commando raid on a flotilla last week, but stressed that he would only accept an Israeli military investigation conducted by the IDF. (CNN)

An Israeli official said a new list of products allowed into Gaza, announced hours before US President Obama was to host PA President Abbas in Washington, was unrelated to Israel's 31 May takeover of the Gaza aid flotilla that had challenged its Gaza blockade. An Israeli security source said that Israel aimed to remove all restrictions on imported food items for Gaza within a few weeks. Asked about the new list of Israeli-approved products, the Israeli Government official said: "Over the last six months, Israel has increased the volume of goods going into Gaza and their variety. That policy is continuing", pointing out that jam, halva and shaving foam had recently been allowed to enter the Strip. The source made no mention of whether Israel might expand the list to include reconstruction materials. Palestinian officials said Israel was easing its Gaza embargo to allow snack food and drinks into Gaza. (DPA, Reuters)

Israel allowed the entry of items such as soda, juice, jam, spices, shaving cream, potato chips, cookies and candy into Gaza. (The Jerusalem Post)

The IDF reported that 98 aid trucks, carrying goods, gas and fuel, had crossed into Gaza. However, Hamas was still refusing to accept over 60 flotilla aid trucks. (www.idf.il)

Speaking to reporters in Montreal, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner characterized as "rather negative" the Israeli response to a European proposal for the EU to be granted oversight over ships bound for the Gaza Strip. (Middle East Online)

Twenty-five members of the Knesset submitted a bill proposing that money slated for transfer to PA be used to compensate Israelis hurt by the settlement products boycott. The bill would also prohibit Israeli citizens from encouraging the boycott and deny entry to Israel for any foreigners involved in it. (IMEMC, Ynetnews)

Israeli forces and settlers from "Elon Moreh" were reported to have prevented Palestinian farmers in Nablus from reaching their fields. (The Palestine Telegraph)

Israeli forces detained three anti-wall protesters in the West Bank, including Mazin Qumsiyeh, a Palestinian-American activist and former Yale geneticist. The protestors were detained in Walaja, a village near Bethlehem where construction of Israel's wall had sparked confrontation with locals. (Ma'an News Agency)

At the meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at UN Headquarters in New York, former US diplomat Edward Peck gave an eyewitness account of his recent experience on board the Gaza aid flotilla that had been intercepted on 31 May. (UN News Centre)

10

The IDF reported that its forces had arrested 14 Palestinians for "suspected terrorist activity" overnight. (www.idf.il)

In its weekly report, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights found that one Palestinian civilian and five fighters had been killed by Israeli forces during the weeklong reporting period. In addition, two Palestinian civilians and one fighter had been wounded in the West Bank. (www.pchrgaza.org)

Following the meeting between PA President Abbas and President Obama at the White House, Israeli Defense officials noted their expectation that further Israeli "concessions" would be required, including confidence-building measures such as the transfer of security responsibilities to the PA. (The Jerusalem Post)

PA President Abbas said that lack of progress in the Middle East peace process was "beginning to erode" faith that a two-State solution is possible.

"I would like to express some concern that the situation is extremely difficult", Mr. Abbas told the Brookings Institution in Washington. (BBC)

The PA decided to postpone local elections that had been scheduled for 17 July in the West Bank. No official reason was given for the delay. (The New York Times)

Senior officials from the Israeli Foreign Ministry stated that during the preparatory talks of how to address the issue of the aid flotilla, the Ministry had warned the Navy of the potential diplomatic consequences of raiding the ships in international waters. (Haaretz)

Head of the Free Palestine Movement, Yasser Qashlaq, announced that Freedom Flotilla 2 could include up to 50 ships. (IMEMC)

EU Trade Commissioner, Karel De Gucht, and PA Minister of National Economy, Hassan Abu Libdeh, discussed measures to enhance EU-Palestinian bilateral trade relations and to facilitate trade of Palestinian products to EU markets. Commissioner Karel De Gucht said: "The European Commission is expected to propose granting duty-free quota-free access for Palestinian exports to the EU in the coming months ... The EU will also continue to support the Palestinian request to become an observer to the World Trade Organization." (www.europa.eu)

The economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had seen some improvement but remains precarious, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where the continued Israeli blockade undermines prospects for employment and growth, stated a report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories issued by the ILO. (www.ilo.org)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called for Gaza's borders to be opened in line with the [Access and Movement] agreement that would restore a PA role in managing the crossings. (Ynetnews)

The EU wants to help open a sea route to Gaza and revive and expand its role at the land crossings into the area, diplomatic sources told The Jerusalem Post. The EU Foreign Affairs Council plans to debate the matter on 14 June, when EU Ministers convene in Luxembourg for their monthly meeting. Spain was drawing up new proposals for lifting Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos was to present Madrid's ideas to EU colleagues. (The Guardian, The Jerusalem Post)

Israel announced that the Karni crossing into Gaza would be closed today for "security reasons". Meanwhile, Egypt announced that the Rafah crossing would remain open for humanitarian aid. (IMEMC, The Palestine Telegraph)

Israel and the US agreed on the nature of the Israeli investigative committee that will look into the events surrounding the takeover of the Gaza-bound aid flotilla. An official announcement on the committee was due to be made today, though the declaration could be deferred to 12 June. (Haaretz)

Morocco appealed for the "immediate" lifting of the "unjust" blockade imposed on the population of Gaza, and underscored the need for an international investigation into the "politically, legally and diplomatically" unacceptable flotilla response. The call had been made in Istanbul by Moroccan Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri. (Agence Maghreb Arabe Presse)

Brazilian-American filmmaker Iara Lee, a passenger on board the "Mavi Marmara", had managed to smuggle out an hour of footage taken during the

31 May flotilla incident. An activist from the group Cultures of Resistance, Lee had released her footage to the press at the United Nations. The footage starts before the attack, with the sounds of a passenger chanting prayers. Later, it features gripping images of wounded passengers, along with passengers bearing metal poles and slingshots targeted at the helicopters flying above. (*Inter Press Service*)

Israeli settlers set fire to a car belonging to a Palestinian near Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Palestine Telegraph*)

The Israeli authorities handed notification to five Palestinian families in the West Bank village of Al-Nabi Saleh that their homes were to be demolished since they had been built without the needed permits. (*arabnews.com*)

The PA Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs announced the death of a 26-year-old Palestinian man in an Israeli prison, saying that the cause of death remained unclear. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A 15-person aid convoy will depart from Bahrain in the coming days, loaded with almost a ton of aid for the Gaza Strip, a spokesman for the Popular Committee against the Siege said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

German Jews were preparing to send a ship loaded with humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip at the end of July despite an Israeli blockade, a representative for the initiative said. "The list of passengers has not been drawn up yet but we have a lot of requests from around the world," said Edith Lutz, who was preparing the journey for the German chapter of European Jews for a Just Peace. (*AFP*)

11

Israeli soldiers detained and violently attacked a Palestinian youth in Beit Ummar, near Hebron, and released him later on. The 16-year-old had suffered concussions and bruises and was moved to a local medical centre. (*MEMC*)

A Palestinian man was shot and killed by Israeli border guards today, after he had reportedly failed to stop at a checkpoint in the Wadi al-Joz neighbourhood in Jerusalem. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel, Egypt, the Quartet and the PA have held talks in recent days to try to open further crossings into the Gaza Strip. (*Haaretz*)

"Any inquiry set up by Israel to investigate the Gaza flotilla incident must be given a genuine capacity to find the facts" to be credible, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, Philip Alston. "First, it must be independent of the Government. Second, it must be given full legal authority to obtain direct access to all relevant evidence, including the key witnesses. And third, its final report must be made public." (*www.ohchr.org*)

Israeli police were on alert today against possible demonstrations by Palestinians over last week's deadly assault on a Gaza aid ship and have banned access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to men under age 40, a spokesman said. (*AFP*)

The Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms strongly condemned the detention of three journalists today by the IDF. The photographers had been covering the Bil'in weekly [anti-wall] march. (*www.madacenter.org*)

12

A 10-year-old Palestinian child in Hebron was hospitalized after being beaten by Israeli soldiers. (*MEMC*)

Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero told visiting PA President Abbas: "With the help of the American President, Barack Obama, we will be able to create a schedule for direct talks and opening of dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians." Mr. Zapatero also said his country wanted a "strong, joint EU position on the siege on Gaza and the humanitarian situation there". (*AFP*)

13

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said during a meeting of Likud ministers that he supported easing the three-year blockade on the Gaza Strip but he would not approve the lifting of the naval blockade. (*Haaretz*)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa visited the Gaza Strip. "This blockade ... must be lifted and must be broken and the Arab League decision is very clear in this regard," Mr. Moussa said. Palestinian and Arab League officials said that his visit was also aimed at giving momentum to reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah that Egypt had sponsored. Mr. Moussa met Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, in his home rather than in his office. "We see this visit as a practical step along the way towards breaking the siege," Mr. Haniyeh, with Mr. Moussa at his side, told reporters after their hour-long meeting. (*Reuters*)

PA President Abbas arrived in Paris for a two-day visit. He was received by President Nicolas Sarkozy and Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner. Topics discussed included the recent tragedy off the coast of Gaza, and ways to encourage the lifting of the blockade. This visit provided an opportunity to reaffirm France's support for Mr. Abbas. (*www.diplomatie.gouv.fr*)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak cancelled a planned visit to Paris after pro-Palestinian activists threatened to have charges brought against him for his role in the Gaza flotilla raid. (*AP, Ynetnews*)

14

Israeli forces shot and injured a 17-year-old Palestinian collecting cement aggregate in a "no-go zone" east of Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces detained three Palestinian teenagers in Beit Ummar on suspicion of being "involved in terrorist activity". (*Ma'an News Agency*)

One Israeli policeman was killed and three others were injured as Palestinians opened fire at a police car near the "Haggi" settlement in the West Bank. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it had been in response to Israel's deadly raid on the Gaza flotilla. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

IDF troops arrested 14 Palestinians in overnight West Bank operations. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

IDF troops discovered a suspicious bag that had been placed by a Palestinian at the Hawwara crossing, south of Nablus. The bag was taken for security examination, and five pipe bombs were found inside. The explosive devices were detonated in a controlled manner, and the Palestinian was taken to security forces for questioning. (*dover.idf.il*)

A Qassam rocket was fired from Gaza and exploded in an open area in the western Negev. There were no reports of damage or injury. (*Ynetnews*)

An Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem, said in a [press release](#) introducing its annual report: "From 19 January 2009 to 30 April 2010, Israeli security forces killed 83 Palestinians, 20 of them minors, not including the Palestinians killed during Operation Cast Lead. Of that number, 31 of the Palestinians killed, some 37 per cent, were not taking part in hostilities. Most of the fatalities (67 per cent) were residents of the Gaza Strip. Palestinians killed three Israeli civilians, one a 16-year-old minor, and 4 members of the security forces." (*Haaretz, www.btselem.org*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair said that Israel had agreed in principle to begin easing its blockade on Gaza "in days." Following talks with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in recent days, he believed that there was now a willingness to allow the entry of more goods into the territory. "There would be a shift from a list of goods that are permitted to go in to a list of goods that are prohibited. So that means that anything that is not on the list that is prohibited then goes into Gaza," he added. (*BBC, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Karni, Gaza's bulk goods crossing, was opened for the first time in a week following a closure on 10 June for unspecified security reasons. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The International Committee of the Red Cross [said](#), "The serious incidents that took place on 31 May between Israeli forces and activists on a flotilla heading for Gaza once again put the spotlight on the acute hardship faced by the population in the Gaza Strip. As the ICRC has stressed repeatedly, the dire situation in Gaza cannot be resolved by providing humanitarian aid. ... The whole of Gaza's civilian population is being punished for acts for which they bear no responsibility. The closure therefore constitutes a collective punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law." (*Haaretz, Reuters, www.icrc.org*)

Iran's State radio said that Iran was sending aid ships to Gaza. "Until the end of the Gaza blockade, Iran will continue to ship aid," said an official at Iran's Society for the Defence of the Palestinian Nation. (*Reuters*)

Israel's cabinet [approved](#) an Israeli inquiry into the raid on the Gaza aid flotilla, headed by retired Israeli Supreme Court Judge, Jacob Turkel. It will include two other Israelis: Shabtai Rosen, a British-born professor of international law at Bar Ilan University near Tel Aviv, and Amos Horev, a retired Major-General in the Israeli army. It will also include two non-voting foreign observers: David Trimble, a Northern Ireland politician and Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Canadian jurist Ken Watkin. (*Reuters, www.pmo.gov.il*)

Turkey strongly dismissed the commission established by Israel to investigate the flotilla raid and warned it may revise bilateral ties with Israel if a UN-led inquiry was not launched. (*Hürriyet Daily News*)

The Council of the European Union [adopted](#) conclusions on Gaza, in which it said, "The Council believes that an immediate, full, and impartial inquiry into these events and the circumstances surrounding [the flotilla raid] is essential. To command the confidence of the international community this should include credible international participation." "The EU stands ready to contribute to the implementation of a mechanism based on the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. ... To this end, full and regular access via land crossings, and possibly by sea, on the basis of a list of prohibited goods, should be the prime aim, while at the same time providing strict control over the destination of imported merchandise," it added.

(*Haaretz, www.consilium.europa.eu*)

Parties defending a twelfth century Muslim cemetery and holy site in Jerusalem from disinterment submitted new evidence to various UN bodies as Israel pushed for the construction of a tolerance museum on the site. The latest evidence will be added to the original petition for urgent action filed on 10 February 2010 in Geneva by the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York, on behalf of descendants of individuals buried in the Mamilla Cemetery, to UNESCO, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Special Rapporteurs, and the Swiss Government. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Responding to requests from the Palestinian Workers Union, the Norwegian Ports Union decided to follow its Swedish counterpart by launching a boycott of all Israeli ships for two weeks, starting on 16 June. (*IMEMC*)

The Human Rights Council [considered](#) the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, holding an interactive dialogue on the annual report of Special Rapporteur Richard Falk. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, reporting on the follow-up to the Goldstone report, said that her Office had explored the modalities for the establishment of an escrow fund for the provision of reparations to Palestinians. She also announced the appointment of Mr. Param Cumaraswamy of Malaysia, Judge Mary McGowan Davis of the United States, and Professor Christian Tomuschat of Germany, to an Independent Committee that would monitor Israeli and Palestinian investigations into the Gaza conflict. (*www.ohchr.org, www.unog.ch*)

Associate Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, Farhan Haq [said](#), "The Secretary-General takes note of the Israeli announcement on their [flotilla] inquiry. A thorough Israeli investigation is important and could fit with the Secretary-General's proposal, which would fully meet the international community's expectation for a credible and impartial investigation. His proposal for an international inquiry remains on the table and he hopes for a positive Israeli response." (*UN News Centre*)

A popular resistance campaign against the [Israeli] buffer zone in Gaza held a protest, with dozens of locals and international activists towards marching the militarized area east of Khan Yunis. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

15

A top Israeli security official, Shin Bet Chief Yuval Diskin, warned a parliamentary committee that lifting Israel's naval blockade of Gaza could pose a grave threat to Israel. (*AP*)

A Gaza tunnel worker was killed this morning when the underground passage he was working in collapsed, bringing the total number of dead to 156 during three years of siege, officials said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa was meeting with PA President Abbas today in Egypt for discussions on Palestinian unity. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An aid ship transporting medical supplies to Gaza would leave Lebanon in the coming days with dozens of women activists on board, one of the organizers told *AFP* today. (*AFP*)

Israel was examining ways to ease its Gaza blockade, a cabinet minister said today, calling the current policy counterproductive and confirming remarks by Quartet Envoy Tony Blair that change was likely. "It is time to end the closure in its current form. It does not provide any value to Israel. From a diplomatic standpoint it causes great image problems," Welfare [and Social Affairs] Minister Isaac Herzog said. (*Reuters*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair hailed the Israeli cabinet's expected approval of a plan to ease the blockade of Gaza and allow more aid in as "a very important step". (*Haaretz*)

The UN had agreed to deliver to Gaza the cargo aboard three aid ships seized by Israel on 31 May and had won the consent of Israel and the cargo's Turkish owners to do so, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, told the Security Council. (*Reuters, UN News Centre*)

Following the declaration by the Red Cross that Israel's blockade of Gaza constituted a violation of international humanitarian law, the Free Gaza Movement declared its efforts to sail to the coastal enclave "legal and necessary". A [statement](#) from the group said that humanitarian actors must take up the mantle, as "Governments refuse to do so". (*Ma'an News Agency, www.freegaza.org*)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak discussed efforts to lift the Israeli blockade of Gaza at a meeting with PA President Abbas. (*DPA*)

The Egyptian Government today rejected an Israeli proposal which would leave Gaza entirely dependent on Egypt for goods and access. The

rejection came in response to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to let Transportation [and Road Safety] Minister Yisrael Katz come up with a proposal for complete Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip. (DPA)

Shin Bet security service director Yuval Diskin said that Hamas was busy buying up land within the municipal territory of Jerusalem. (Haaretz)

Two Israeli NGOs, Binkom and Ir Amim, published a brief report in which it was stated that 80 per cent of land for development in what was called "Jewish neighbourhoods" of Jerusalem could not be purchased by Palestinians. (WFA)

Israeli bulldozers demolished a small warehouse in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Abu Tor, local residents and Israeli authorities said. A stable was also reportedly demolished in Silwan. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli cabinet Minister Dan Meridor said today that Israel should refrain from building in areas that would be annexed to the PA in the future, even after a 10-month settlement construction freeze was over in September. Mr. Meridor made the comments during a tour of the West Bank settlement of "Efrat". (Haaretz)

PA President Abbas said that setting up an internal Israeli committee on the flotilla probe did not comply with UN demands. In addition, EU Governments raised questions about the credibility of Israel's inquiry. In contrast, Washington welcomed Israel's announcement, describing it as "an important step forward". (AFP, BBC, The Guardian)

Two weeks after the flotilla raid, journalists were still waiting for the return of their material, belongings and professional equipment, Reporters without Borders said. The group said that it supported journalists' attempts to recover their property from the Israeli authorities and, if they were unsuccessful, the press freedom organization demanded that they be compensated in full for their losses. (WFA)

Israel asked the EU countries to prevent vessels bound for Gaza from leaving their ports and their citizens from taking part in those trips to Gaza. (KUNA)

During his periodic briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Roberterry, said, "This body clearly stated two weeks ago that the situation in Gaza is not sustainable. We agree that it must change ... The Secretary-General is determined to transform this crisis into an opportunity for real change on the ground ... At the same time, we must not lose track of the need to sustain the proximity talks on the core issues, and buttress them by concrete progress on the ground in both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, with a view to moving to direct talks as soon as possible." (UN News Centre)

16

Israeli forces shot and wounded in the leg a teenage boy in the Gaza Strip, medics said. He had been walking near the Erez crossing when a soldier opened fire. (Ma'an News Agency)

US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, George Mitchell, was scheduled to return to the region today to continue mediating indirect talks between Palestinian and Israeli officials, Israel's Army Radio reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stressed to Prime Minister Netanyahu and other members of a forum of seven senior ministers that Israel must put forth a "daring and assertive political initiative" in the coming months to emerge from its international isolation of the past year. Mr. Barak will travel to Washington for talks with senior Administration officials on advancing the peace process with the Palestinians. (Haaretz)

UNRWA Spokesman Chris Gunness said that the blockade should be lifted entirely. "We need to judge the Israeli authorities by deeds not words because there have been many words in the past", he said. (The Guardian)

According to an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report, the Israeli authorities had implemented a series of measures that improved the freedom of movement of Palestinians between most West Bank urban centres, particularly in the north. The total number of closure obstacles documented by OCHA at the end of the reporting period stood at 505, down from 626 in March 2009. However, no significant improvement took place in the access of Palestinians to areas behind the separation wall, including East Jerusalem, and to land and rural communities in the Jordan Valley. (www.ochaopt.org)

Israeli authorities will soon allow kitchenware into Gaza, a Palestinian coordination official said today. The move came as the result of a court decision following a lawsuit filed by Palestinian traders. (Ma'an News Agency)

The "Turkel committee," a panel set up to investigate the IDF raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla, was due to convene today for the first time. This preliminary meeting would allow the panel members to meet one another and to decide on their desired work methods. (Haaretz)

Jewish Voice for a Just Peace, an association of German Jews planning to send a boat with humanitarian aid to break the Gaza blockade, was searching for a second vessel, given the high number of requests to travel with the group. (DPA)

Israel will significantly ease its land blockade of Gaza today, officials said, in an effort to blunt the widespread international criticism that followed the recent flotilla raid. Senior cabinet ministers were meeting to limit restrictions on what gets into Gaza to a short list of goods. But the Israeli naval blockade that had been at the root of the raid will remain intact. (AP)

Amnesty International called upon the Israeli authorities to end house demolitions, which had left thousands of Palestinians living in daily fear of eviction from their homes. A new briefing, "As safe as houses? Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes", revealed the extent to which Israeli forces were destroying homes and other structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, claiming they have been built illegally. (www.amnesty.org)

A private international arbitration commission in London ruled that the UN should compensate three Gaza construction companies who could not complete UN projects because of the blockade. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Washington-based group J Street will launch a new media campaign in late June aimed at encouraging the US Administration to take greater initiative in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. (The Jerusalem Post)

17

The IDF slightly injured a member of the Saraya Al-Quds (armed wing of Islamic Jihad) in Khan Yunis, near the border fence between Israel and Gaza. An Israeli military spokeswoman said that shots had been fired in the direction of a "Palestinian operative placing an explosive device" near the border area, within the "no-go zone". (Ma'an News Agency)

Onlookers north of Beit Lahia in Gaza said that a number of armoured Israeli vehicles had opened machine-gun fire at farmers near the former settlement of "Eli Sinai," while bulldozers ploughed lands. An Israeli military spokeswoman said the fire followed an attempted attack. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak met with US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, George Mitchell, in Jerusalem. Mr. Barak expressed hope that proximity talks would lead to direct talks in the future between Israel and the Palestinians. (The Jerusalem Post)

During the visit of PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki to Estonia, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said that an independent Palestinian State remained the only way to resolve the Middle East conflict. President Ilves was due to meet Palestinian leaders later during the opening of an e-Government conference in Ramallah organized by Estonia. (AFP)

An Israeli security cabinet [decision](#) announced the agreement to ease the blockade of the Gaza Strip by allowing in more construction materials for civilian projects, provided those projects were carried out under international supervision, Government and military officials said. All food would be allowed in effective immediately said a military official. Israel was maintaining its naval blockade intended to prevent weapons shipments. Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that the closure should be ended altogether, describing the situation as a collective punishment that must be lifted. (AP, [www.pmo.gov.il](#))

Interfax quoted the Russian Foreign Ministry as calling upon Israel to lift the Gaza blockade entirely, for the entry of people and ships to the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Moratinos, said that the intention of Israel to ease the land blockade of the Gaza Strip “goes in the right direction”. Mr. Moratinos, whose country holds the EU Presidency, told journalists: “From here on, the EU has to reactivate again the agreement of 2005 [on Movement and Access] and for that we are working with all the parties involved”, he said. (KUNA)

Robert Gibbs, the White House Press Secretary, told reporters that “we welcome the principles” announced by the Israeli Government. “They’re a step in the right direction,” he said, adding that the Administration would continue to work with Israel “to improve a humanitarian situation in Gaza that the President has said is unsustainable”. Mark Toner, a State Department spokesman, said that the United States wanted to see “an expansion of the scope and types of goods allowed into Gaza to address the Palestinians’ legitimate needs ... while addressing, obviously, Israel’s legitimate security need.” (The Washington Post)

Cristina Galach, Spokesperson for the EU Presidency, said that the decision to ease the Gaza blockade, “... is a step in the right direction”. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, said: “I look with great interest at what the Israeli cabinet is saying. This is an in-principle statement ... obviously the detail is what matters”. She said she would meet with EU experts in Brussels the following day to discuss what could be offered, explaining that the EU had made an offer to monitor border crossings and was waiting for Israel’s consideration. She stressed that the PA should also be involved in the exercise, which would require Hamas to make peace with the PA. (AP, DPA)

Jordan’s Information Minister, Nabil Sharif, said that Israel’s plan to ease its blockade of the Gaza Strip was not enough and urged a complete lifting of all restrictions. (AFP)

Hamas official Ahmed Yousef said the Israeli cabinet’s decision was “nonsense”, describing it as Israeli propaganda to evade international pressure. He said: “I don’t believe that we need more ketchup and mayonnaise”. ... What we need is a total lifting of the blockade and opening of all border crossings”. Salah Bardawil, a Hamas official said, “We want a real lifting of the siege, not window-dressing”. (AP, DPA)

The following statement was issued by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General is encouraged that the Israeli Government is reviewing its policy towards Gaza, and he hopes that today’s decision by the Israeli security cabinet is a real step towards meeting needs in Gaza. The Secretary-General has asked his envoy, Robert Serry, to immediately engage the Israeli Government to learn more about the decision and the additional measures and steps of implementation still required. The United Nations continues to seek a fundamental change in policy as agreed by the Quartet, so that humanitarian assistance, commercial goods and people are able to flow through functioning open crossings, and so that reconstruction can take place. The United Nations has demonstrated the integrity of its programming and stands ready to scale up its efforts to help Gaza recover and rebuild if enabled to do so. (UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/12964)

The PA expressed reservations at the possibility of sending an EU naval force to monitor Gaza shores. The PA “calls on all parties not to bring Gaza into new mazes,” said Yasser Abed Rabbo, an aide to President Abbas. “The efforts must aim at lifting the Israeli siege on Gaza completely,” he told *Voice of Palestine* radio. (Xinhua)

Turkey said that it would not send its ambassador back to Israel unless it received an apology for the Gaza aid flotilla assault. Ankara wanted Israel to agree to an international investigation into the raid and compensate victims, a Government official said. (AP)

After Israel had failed to apologize or pay compensations for the killing of the Turkish citizens in its attack on the “Mavi Marmara”, Turkey decided to shelve 16 military agreements with Israel, including a \$757 million plane and tank modernization project and a missile project worth over \$1.5 billion. President Abdullah Gül had earlier announced that a road map was to be prepared on the issue of sanctions against Israel. (Press TV, Today’s Zaman)

Kumar Chitty, former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Registrar of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, said that the Law of the Sea Convention could not be invoked by Turkey and Israel, as both countries were not party to it. Mr. Chitty said: “The right to impose a naval blockade flows ... from the Laws of Armed Conflict, as part of customary international law, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations (Article 42) ... A State party to an armed conflict had the right to establish a naval blockade on its enemy’s coast for security reasons ... whatever the cargo carried by [the] vessels.” (Inter Press Service)

Israel issued an official complaint against the president of the UN Correspondents Association for barring Israel from responding to the public screening of a documentary film on the events of the recent Gaza-bound aid flotilla, made by one of the activists, by presenting its own footage. (Haaretz)

In Paris, Rory Byrne, a spokesman for the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza, said that his group and others had six ships and many activists should be ready to set sail to Gaza within the next few weeks. Despite the easing of the blockade, he said that his group wanted to “keep the pressure up” on Israel to reopen Gaza’s borders completely. (AP)

The Fafo Research Foundation announced its latest opinion [poll results](#) from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Compared to last year’s results, the 2010 poll found that Palestinians were split over the unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian State. They were generally more confident in the Fayyad Government and in the security services in the West Bank but not in those of the Gaza Strip. They were more confident in the leadership of Fatah than that of Hamas. The majority of the respondents were greatly in favour of new legislative elections this year but only if held in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip; they thought Hamas should participate. ([www.fafo.no](#))

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The Popular Resistance Committees had launched three mortar shells towards Israel from the Rafah area, a statement from the group said. An Israeli military spokesman said one shell had landed in Israel, with no injuries. Islamic Jihad said that its fighters had launched five mortar shells toward Israel’s Kissufim military base on the Gaza border, while Israeli officials said they were unaware of the incident. (Ma’an News Agency)

“There have been many, many false dawns,” UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness said, emphasizing that the collective punishment of 1.5 million people in Gaza was illegal. “There is no such thing as a partial violation of international law,” Mr. Gunness added, questioning the announced plan to ease the blockade, and calling for a total end to the siege. The announced “liberalization” must be assessed by “deeds and not by words because there have been many words indeed,” he said. (BBC, Ma’an News Agency)

Israel had dramatically accelerated construction in the Jordan valley settlement of “Maskiyot”, witnesses said. (Petra)

The Israeli Planning and Construction Committee will discuss on 21 June a plan put forth by Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat to demolish dozens of Arab homes in Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. (IMEMC, Haaretz)

Egypt had rejected Israel’s request to stop the Iranian ships slated to sail to the Gaza Strip in the coming days from passing through the Suez Canal,

the *al-Dar* newspaper reported, citing Egyptian sources. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *Ynetnews*)

Addressing calls for an international investigation into the flotilla raid, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said during a visit to France: "An international committee is an infringement of our sovereignty and an insult to our legal system." He stated that Israel might accept having international observers monitor Gaza Strip border crossings in order to supervise the transfer of humanitarian supplies to Gaza. (*AP*, *IMEMC*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in [comments](#) to the press, said the following regarding "the situation in Gaza in the aftermath of the flotilla incident": "I am encouraged that the Israeli Government is reviewing its policy, and by its recent decision to allow more goods. Nevertheless, much more is required to really meet the needs of the people. I continue to call for a fundamental change in the policies that apply to Gaza. With respect to an inquiry into the flotilla incident, Israel, as you know, has announced the formation of a public Commission. Indeed, a thorough Israeli investigation is important. As you know, the Security Council called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards. I have proposed an international panel, under the aegis of a third party and in which both Turkey and Israel would actively participate. I will continue my efforts to achieve this." (www.un.org)

"Victims of the systematic and often arbitrary restrictions on human rights and basic freedoms have the right to see justice prevail," said Ambassador Palitha T.B. Kohona, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in New York, and Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israel Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, at the end of a 13-day fact-finding visit to Cairo, Amman and Damascus. The Committee had heard the testimonies of dozens of witnesses from across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, recounting their first-hand experiences of life under occupation. (www.unog.ch)

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Germany sharply criticized Israel for denying its Development Aid Minister entry to the Gaza Strip to visit a humanitarian project co-funded by Berlin.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said that he regretted Israel's decision, while Development Aid Minister Dirk Niebel – who was on a four-day trip to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory – said that it was "a big diplomatic mistake". (*Reuters*)

Hamas rejected Israeli demands to free Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and renounce violence in exchange for lifting the Gaza blockade. "Hamas is sticking to its strategy and will not give up any Palestinian national principle, mainly resistance which is our legitimate right", said Ismail Radwan, a spokesman for Hamas. (*Xinhua*)

Israel formally announced an eased blockade of Gaza that could significantly increase the flow of overland goods into the coastal enclave. Israel would then allow items into Gaza unless they featured on a new list which specified banned goods. The move will let in humanitarian aid, food and building supplies. (*The New York Times*, *Haaretz*, *BBC*)

Israel said that any ship headed to the Gaza Strip will be intercepted as part of its blockade. After a weekly cabinet meeting, Israel's Science Minister said that no vessels would be allowed to reach the shores of the Strip. (*Xinhua*)

Relatives of captive Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and activists in the public campaign to secure his release urged Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak to acknowledge that there was no alternative to freeing the Palestinian prisoners whose release Hamas had demanded in return for Shalit. (*Haaretz*)

21

The Shin Bet Security Service and Israel Police arrested three cells in East Jerusalem they said were connected to a string of attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces in the West Bank, authorities announced today after a gag order was lifted. Police said that the suspects had confessed to taking part in the attacks, most of which had taken place in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem in recent months. (*Haaretz*)

One misfired projectile landed in northern Gaza, in addition to a mortar attack on an Israeli patrol in southern Gaza, and allegations of Israeli fire in retaliation. No injuries or damages were reported in the incidents. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak was in the United States for talks with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Mr. Barak will also meet with US defense and intelligence chiefs as well as with fellow leaders at a Socialist International meeting in New York, before returning to Israel on Thursday. (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas announced for the first time that he was considering visiting the Gaza Strip soon. Mr. Abbas was quoted by the Ramallah-based *Al-Ayyam*. (*Xinhua*, *Al-Ayyam*)

The White House praised Israel's decision on easing the blockade, as did Quartet Envoy Tony Blair. But both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas dismissed the Israeli announcement as insufficient and called for the complete lifting of the blockade. Israeli human rights groups also said that the announcement fell short, since it did not appear to include the free passage of raw materials for industry, provisions to allow the export of finished goods, and freer movement of people into and out of the territory. (*The Wall Street Journal*)

The Middle East Quartet welcomed Israel's easing of its blockade on Gaza but highlighted the importance of implementing the action, according to a [statement](#) released today by the United Nations. "The new policy towards Gaza just announced by the Government of Israel is a welcome development", the statement said. "The Quartet notes that the elaboration of further details and modalities of implementation will be important in ensuring the effectiveness of the new policy. Full and effective implementation will comprise a significant shift in strategy towards meeting the needs of Gaza's population for humanitarian and commercial goods, civilian reconstruction and infrastructure, and legitimate economic activity as well as the security needs of Israel." (*AFP*, www.un.org)

Israel opened Gaza's Kerem Shalom and Karni crossings for limited deliveries today, for entry of aid and commercial goods, along with fuel supplies, officials said. The decision to change, and possibly increase, the operating hours of the Karni crossing marked the sole departure from the siege status quo. In recent months, the crossing had been open two days a week, generally Tuesdays and Thursdays. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak told reporters: "Only what is forbidden will not be allowed to enter [Gaza], with ... dual use materials such as cement and iron, which are aimed at projects led by the UN, Quartet, or other international bodies to ... come through Ashdod Port. I'd like to remind all of you that the same applies to Ramallah, Jenin, and Nablus ... when a product has to enter the West Bank [it goes through Ashdod]". (*Xinhua*)

Israeli construction vehicles and bulldozers began digging in Jerusalem this morning, in what was believed to be groundwork for the building of some 600 new settlement units. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Another ship with activists and aid on board could be bound for Gaza within a few days after Lebanese authorities granted permission today for it to sail first to Cyprus. "We have been granted permission to go to Cyprus and we are now in the process of making final preparations", said Yasser Kashlak, a Syrian of Palestinian origin who heads the group organizing the trip, the Free Palestine Movement. Organizers said that the ship planned to sail in the next few days, but did not give an exact date for departure because of security concerns. (*AP*)

Tens of Palestinian boats set sail from Gaza today in preparation for welcoming two Lebanese aid ships that were expected to head for the blockaded enclave soon. (*Xinhua*)

Quartet Representative Tony Blair urged charities to stop launching aid flotillas to the Gaza Strip. "If we implement this policy so that the things that people are trying to bring in by flotilla you can bring in through the legitimate existing crossings, do it that way," Mr. Blair told *The Jerusalem Post* in

an interview. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Jerusalem's mayor pressed ahead today with a contentious plan to raze 22 Palestinian homes to make room for a tourist centre that Palestinians fear would tighten Israel's grip on the city's contested eastern sector. (AP)

Residents and Israeli activists will protest today as the Jerusalem Municipality meets to authorize a plan for demolitions in the city. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

US State Department Spokesman P. J. Crowley expressed concern about Israel's approval of a plan that entailed the demolition of 22 Palestinian homes in the Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, saying it was the kind of action that undermined trust and increased the risk of violence.

Under the plan, homes would be demolished to make room for an Israeli tourist park. (BBC, www.state.gov)

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said today that the issue of Palestinian refugees was not insoluble as Israel claimed. In his opening address at the consultative committee meeting of UNRWA, Mr. Aboul Gheit said that the Arab Peace Initiative adopted a realistic principle in that respect based on reaching a just solution to the refugees issue in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). It was the first time that the annual meeting of UNRWA was being held in Egypt. (*Xinhua*)

In Cairo, UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi told the UNRWA Advisory Commission that UNRWA's finances were in a desperately poor state, hindering the Agency's ability to fulfil its tasks. He recalled that the Gaza blockade had entered its fourth year, stressing that the closure had resulted in a crisis that transcended the humanitarian sphere. He said that UNRWA was ready to play a significant role not only in the reconstruction of Gaza but also in projects benefiting the refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. (www.unrwa.org)

The Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms today condemned an IDF attack on six Palestinian journalists, who had been covering peaceful marches in the West Bank. (www.madacenter.org)

22

Israeli forces entered the Hebron-area town of Dura, detaining more than 20 Palestinian men, including several members of the same family. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli military appeals court ordered the evacuation of settlers from Palestinian-owned land near Hebron. Landowner Khalil Al-Jbour said that the land had been taken over in 2004 by residents of the "Susiya" settlement south-east of the village. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

King Abdullah II of Jordan held talks with PA President Abbas on the latest developments in the peace process and on efforts to end the siege on Gaza, according to a Royal Court statement. The leaders condemned Israel's decision to deport four PLC members from Jerusalem as well as its decision to go ahead with the construction of an archaeological park in the Silwan area of East Jerusalem, which would entail demolishing 22 Palestinian homes. (*The Jordan Times*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's national security adviser Uzi Arad, said that the push for Palestinian statehood had weakened Israel's standing in the world, and he suggested that the outlook was bleak for US-mediated negotiations in the region. (*The Washington Post*)

Crossings liaison official Raed Fattouh said Israeli crossings officials had informed him that 130 truckloads of goods would be permitted to enter Gaza today via one single open crossing, bringing in agricultural tools, car parts, ketchup, sewing needles, toys, and makeup. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

According to *IRIN*, Col. Moshe Levi, head of the Israeli District Coordination and Liaison Office, had told the media the previous day: "We informed the Palestinian side yesterday that we are able to increase the amount of wares entering the Gaza Strip by more than 30 per cent. We intend to enlarge the variety of goods to everything, except material that is likely to be used for terror operations". Sources in Gaza also told *IRIN* that prices had already dropped in local markets. However, dozens of trucks with various supplies taken off the aid flotilla were still in [Israeli] Ministry of Defense warehouses and at the Kerem Shalom crossing as Hamas was refusing to let them enter. (www.irinnews.org)

During a visit by Quartet Representative Tony Blair to the Kerem Shalom crossing, he said that the goal was to help Gaza residents change their lives and to give them hope. He expressed hope that Israel would continue easing the blockade in the coming weeks, noting that a lot of work was being done and stating that the inflow of equipment for UN projects would be increased, including water infrastructure, sanitation and construction of schools. (*Ynetnews*)

Suhail Skaik, Director of the Gaza Electricity Company said that the chronic shortage of industrial fuel had recently led to the mounting number of blackouts: "It is summer now in Gaza, and the heat is unbearable, the power consumption has been increasing. Electricity goes off 12 hours per day all over Gaza, where people become obliged to use electric generators that cause noise and pollution," Mr. Skaik said. (*Xinhua*)

In response to Israeli warnings that it would use "all necessary force" to stop aid boats planning to sail to Gaza, the Lebanese Foreign Ministry sent a letter to the UN saying that Lebanon would hold Israel responsible for any attack. The letter said that Lebanon "cannot prohibit a ship from leaving its ports if its cargo, passengers, and destination all comply with Lebanese law". (AFP)

Iran's TV announced that Iran would send a ship called "Infants of Gaza," carrying aid and pro-Palestinian activists to Gaza, while in Israel, commandos were training for another possible confrontation at sea, according to security officials. Egyptian transportation official Mohammad Abdelwahab said Egypt would not prevent the ship from passing through the Suez Canal. (AP)

PA President Abbas urged the US to intervene to block the [demolitions] in East Jerusalem. "The United States should take into consideration the Israeli measures and ask Israel to stop," he told reporters after talks with Jordan's King Abdullah II in Amman, adding, "We reject such actions, which hinder any political progress". Earlier, Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that he had passed on a message from President Abbas to Washington [asking] to revoke this Israeli order. (AFP)

In Washington, visiting Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak criticized the Jerusalem Municipality for approving a plan to raze 22 Palestinian homes as "bad timing" and poor "common sense". Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat's office rejected Mr. Barak's comments, saying that the plan would rehabilitate a neglected section of the city and the plan also included the construction of thousands of apartments for Arab residents. (AP, BBC)

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that the United States would be making an additional contribution of \$60.3 million to support UNRWA's core budget and special projects in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. With this contribution, the US would have provided more than \$225 million to UNRWA in 2010. (www.unrwa.org)

23

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu called upon PA President Abbas to start direct peace talks with Israel without delay. Spokesperson for the PA, Ghassan Khatib, stated that the Palestinian legitimate demands were clear: Israel must fully cease settlement activities before direct talks could be resumed. (IMEMC)

Israeli authorities opened the Karem Abu Salem crossing to permit the entry of 4,000 tons of gravel for UNRWA projects. Israel will open the

crossing again today for 124 to 134 vans loaded with aid for industrial and agricultural development. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak promised more goods would enter the Gaza Strip after Israel's decision to ease its blockade of the Palestinian enclave, the US State Department [said](http://www.state.gov). (*www.state.gov*)

After the Israeli Government had demolished two [settler] houses, Israeli settlers from "Bat Ayin" attacked Palestinian homes in Safa, a village next to Beit Ummar, as part of their "price tag" policy. To quell the Palestinian response, Israeli soldiers opened fire with rubber bullets, fire gas, and sound bombs. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Palestine Telegraph*)

Israeli forces deployed in East Jerusalem following fierce clashes between local landowners and settlers attempting to expand a road in the area, in advance of plans to install a mobile home in the Beit Safafa area, onlookers said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem threatened to evict four Palestinian families which included 40 individuals they claimed were living on property belonging to Jews in the neighbourhood of Silwan. They said that they would hire private security firms if the residents did not evacuate by 4 July.

(*Haaretz*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern that an Israeli plan to raze 22 Arab homes to make way for an archaeological park in annexed East Jerusalem was "unhelpful" and against international law. (*AFP*)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak rejected Israel's attempt to "shirk responsibility towards the Gaza Strip" and place it on Cairo. "We are making efforts to lift the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip", he said in a speech before members of the ruling party. (*Ynetnews*)

Turkey and 12 other south-eastern European countries issued a joint declaration following a Balkan summit demanding an independent and internationally credible investigation into the Gaza flotilla deaths. (*Haaretz*)

High-ranking US officials have reportedly expressed disappointment over the "geriatric" committee appointed to investigate Israel's attack on a Turkish aid ship, according to *Ma'ariv*. The Israeli Government appointed 75-year-old retired justice Yaakov Tirkel to head the panel. The other two members are aged 93 and 89. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab and Muslim members of the UN, led by Malaysia, were working toward assembling the [tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly] to discuss last month's raid of a Gaza-bound flotilla by Israel, *Haaretz* learned from diplomatic sources. (*Haaretz*)

The Swedish Dock Workers Union launched a week-long [boycott] of cargo to and from Israel to protest the Israeli raid on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla, a union representative told *AFP*. (*AFP*)

PA Prime Minister Fayyad laid the cornerstone for a \$50 million sewage treatment plant in Nablus. The German-funded plant was initially approved by Israel in 2001, but had been held up during the years of the [intifada]. (*AP*)

24

The Israel Defense Forces had drawn up new war plans for future conflicts in Gaza which require the evacuation of entire Palestinian villages and refugee camps. The plans reportedly drew on lessons learned from the Goldstone Report, which outlined Israeli violations of international humanitarian law during Operation Cast Lead. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Three projectiles were launched from the Gaza Strip towards the western Negev. No injuries were reported. The launch was reportedly a response to the incursion of 12 Israeli military vehicles into northern Gaza today, which destroyed several dunums of agricultural lands. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Palestinian Authority rejected calls by Prime Minister Netanyahu to start direct peace talks without a full freeze of settlement activities. (*Voice of Palestine Radio*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that Israel would renew settlement building in the West Bank in September. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA President Abbas today denounced Israel's plan to expel four Hamas legislators from Jerusalem. The PA feared that this expulsion would set a dangerous precedent, as it would mark the first time Israel had expelled Arab residents of the city solely on grounds of political affiliation. (*Haaretz*)

The US State Department [announced](http://www.state.gov) that Special Envoy George Mitchell was expected to return to the region next week before Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's 6 July visit to Washington, D.C. (*www.state.gov*)

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) passed a resolution today calling upon Israel to completely end its siege of the Gaza Strip "without prejudice to its own security". (*assembly.coe.int*)

The Likud Central Committee voted to resume settlement construction in the West Bank after the current freeze expires in September. "The Central Committee of the Likud has unanimously approved the pursuit of construction and development in Judea and Samaria", said a statement. (*Haaretz, AFP*)

Lebanese Prime Minister Said Hariri and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah were reportedly working to prevent humanitarian ships from leaving for Gaza. Lebanese leaders feared that any new attempt to break Israel's maritime blockade could dangerously escalate regional tensions. (*Haaretz*)

One of the organizers of an Iranian aid flotilla that was to sail to Gaza announced that the voyage had been cancelled due to "Israeli threats". (*Haaretz*)

The World Bank approved a proposal to provide \$55 million in funding for projects in the West Bank and Gaza to support Palestinian economic recovery and development. (*www.worldbank.org*)

Two Belgian lawyers, working on behalf of 13 Palestinian victims of the 2008-2009 Gaza war, plan to charge 14 Israeli politicians, including Ehud Olmert, Ehud Barak, Tzipi Livni and Matan Vilnai, for crimes against humanity and war crimes. (*Haaretz*)

Audrey Bomse, legal officer for the Free Gaza movement, is conducting an investigation, in conjunction with 12 other lawyers, aimed at bringing a suit against the State of Israel in the International Court of Justice for its conduct during the Gaza flotilla raid. (*Ynetnews*)

25

The Israeli Air Force bombed four targets in Gaza before dawn. Two of the air strikes targeted smuggling tunnels near Rafah, where Palestinian officials reported two casualties. Two additional strikes in the North hit an industrial zone. The IDF said that the strikes were in retaliation for recent projectile fire from Gaza. (*AP, Ma'an News Agency*)

After recently refusing a personal request from German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle to let a prominent German politician visit Gaza from Israel, Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman asked his Italian counterpart, Franco Frattini to lead a delegation of European Foreign Ministers to the Gaza Strip. The delegation could come within weeks but would not meet Hamas officials, Israeli officials added. (*Reuters*)

Israeli President Shimon Peres urged the US and other world powers to engage with Hamas in order to persuade the group to renounce violence and prepare for peace with Israel. (*The Washington Post*)

Israeli officials seized seven oxygen machines donated to the PA by a Norwegian development agency. According to the PA health ministry, the machines were en route to hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli officials claimed that the generators attached "came under the category of

possible use for non-medical purposes” if they were delivered to Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The deputy head of the Gaza Power Authority stated that the only power plant in the Gaza Strip would stop functioning in the evening as it would run out of the fuel. (*IMEMC*)

Morocco strongly criticized the Israeli plan to demolish 22 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, describing it as a step towards altering the Islamic nature of the city. (*Xinhua*)

Israel's decision to expel four Hamas politicians from Jerusalem (three lawmakers and a former cabinet minister) could take effect as early as today.

Israel had not confirmed where they would be sent, but the West Bank was a possible destination. (*AP*)

“Mechanisms exist for the transfer of humanitarian assistance to Gaza by member States and groups that want to do so. Direct delivery by sea is neither appropriate nor responsible, and certainly not effective, under the circumstances,” a US State Department statement said. (*Haaretz*)

The proceedings of the Terkel Committee examining the IDF's raid on the Gaza flotilla will be made open to the public. The Committee will also call upon a number of public figures to testify, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

One of Britain's largest trade unions, UNISON, passed a motion at its annual conference in Bournemouth accusing Israel of lying about the Gaza flotilla incident and called for a complete boycott of Israel and for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

26

In a communiqué, the G8 called the current tensions in Gaza “unsustainable”. “We welcome the Israeli cabinet's announcement of a new policy towards Gaza as a positive development. We urge full and effective implementation of this policy in order to address the needs of Gaza's population for humanitarian and commercial goods, civilian reconstruction and infrastructure, and legitimate economic activity as well as the legitimate security concerns of Israel that must continue to be safeguarded,” it said. (*AP*)

27

Hamas forces stormed an Islamic bank in Gaza and seized 16,000 Jordanian dinars (about \$22,600) at gunpoint. A Hamas spokesman said that the money had been seized under a court order. (*Xinhua*)

Fierce clashes broke out between Israeli forces and Palestinian residents in several East Jerusalem neighbourhoods over Israeli plans to demolish 22 Palestinian homes for a new tourism centre. Six police officers and at least 20 Palestinians were injured. (*The New York Times*)

Ten Palestinian families in the Jordan Valley had been handed home demolition orders and given 24 hours to evacuate their lands. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UNRWA Director of Gaza Operations, John Ging, said that it was “shameful” that the international community allowed the Gaza siege to enter its fourth year as “750,000 innocent children are paying the toll”. Mr. Ging added that, “The political focus should be translated into action rather than discussing improvements or easing the siege.” (*Ma'an News Agency*)

28

One Palestinian was killed and three others injured in an Israeli air strike along the northern Gaza border, medics said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Masked Palestinian gunmen set fire to an UNRWA children's summer camp in Gaza. (*Reuters*)

PA President Abbas said that the Palestinian leadership was waiting for responses [to be presented by] US Special Envoy Mitchell to Palestinian questions on security and borders. He said, “If the Israeli answers were positive, that would encourage us to start direct negotiations.” (*Wafa*)

The PA denied that it would join a three-way summit in Washington, D. C. next month which would include US President Obama, PA President Abbas, and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. (*Xinhua*)

In an interview televised by *PBS*, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that the Israeli Government was impeding Middle East peace attempts, noting that “the coalition Government is the biggest barrier to peace. Israel hasn't really accepted a two-State solution.” (*www.charlierose.com*)

In an interview with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, stressed that the option of disbanding the PA would be put on the table shortly if a two-State solution were not reached. He did not set a time frame for dissolving the PA but hinted at the end of this year. (*Asharq Al-Awsat*)

Gaza's sole power plant, which provided 25 per cent of its electricity, was forced to shut down over the weekend as a result of a payment dispute between Hamas and the PA. The PA blamed Hamas for not forcing tens of thousands of salaried Gazans to pay their bills and thereby share in the cost of industrial fuel for the plant. (*AFP*)

Israel hopes to have the new “negative” list of what is not allowed into the Gaza Strip ready by the time Prime Minister Netanyahu meets President Obama next week. (*Jerusalem Post*)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi said that UNRWA's financial situation was threatening to halt some of its operations. Mr. Grandi said that the complete and final lifting of the siege imposed on Gaza was a must so that the Agency could start the reconstruction process in the Strip. (*Al-Ahram*)

Israel's Prime Minister and Defense Minister will be called to testify in the Terkel Committee's investigation into the Gaza flotilla raid, the leader of the Committee said in an opening statement today, as the body held its opening session. An international observer on the commission said that everyone involved was determined it would be rigorous. (*Reuters*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Israel should expect at least eight more Gaza-bound ships shortly after the World Cup tournament, senior Hamas official Mahmoud Al-Zahhar told *The Independent*. (*The Independent*, *Haaretz*)

The Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved an unprecedented master plan to raze Palestinian homes for the expansion of [settlements] in East Jerusalem. Essentially, the new plan would uniformly apply Israeli zoning and construction procedures to both halves of the city. *Haaretz* reported that the plan had been approved because of pressure from Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat despite expert opinion suggesting the plan had many flaws. In response, the Jerusalem municipality now said that the Silwan plan would not be executed until all the criticisms were addressed. “Such Israeli plans will negatively impact the US-sponsored indirect peace talks,” PA Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said. (*Haaretz*, *Xinhua*)

An Israeli Knesset Member submitted a bill that would require that the Knesset approve any future building freeze in the settlements. The Ministerial Committee for Legislation was expected to debate the bill on 4 July. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad launched the latest anti-settlement goods campaign. The Shop to Shop campaign focused on clearing Palestinian supermarkets and stores of settlement produce. (*AFP*)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal said that as Israel delayed securing a prisoner exchange deal, the demands of the group would grow.

“Shalit will not be the only one and we shall continue capturing the enemy's soldiers and officers until our prisoners are released,” he added.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said: “There are negotiations that need to further develop in order to ensure Shalit's return, and there are different courses of action that could be taken.” (*DPA*, *Haaretz*)

The following statement was issued on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General condemns the vandalism last night by masked armed men of an UNRWA summer games facility in the Gaza Strip. He is very concerned that this is the second such incident in a month. Such attacks are an assault upon the well-being of Gaza's children, 250,000 of whom attend UNRWA's summer games for recreation and education as well as a respite from the difficulties of everyday life in the Strip. The Secretary-General calls upon the de-facto authorities to combat any incitement against United Nations operations, and ensure the safety of UNRWA and other UN personnel and programmes, serving the most vulnerable in Gaza. He calls for those responsible for these incidents to be brought to justice. (*UN press release SG/SM/12978-PAL/2129*)

During a [press encounter](#) at UN Headquarters, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the following about his recent visit to the G20 meeting in Toronto: "The situation in the Middle East is always a key concern of the international community and myself, and we discussed, in depth, how to help and encourage continuing proximity talks and how to bring more fundamental changes in the Gaza blockade. And, also I informed the leaders that my proposal for the investigation on the flotilla raid is still on the table." ([www.un.org](#))

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The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that its operatives had launched two mortar shells at an Israeli target in the northern Gaza Strip early this morning. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

No Palestinian State would be founded in the next two years, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said, citing difficulties in US-mediated peace negotiations as well as divisions among the Palestinians. PA Spokesman Ghassan Khatib said that "Mr. Liberman is issuing a challenge to the international community, which is in agreement on the two-year ceiling." Meanwhile, Hamas Spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri described Mr. Liberman's comment as "a severe slap to the Palestinians and the Arabs who believe in the mirage of a peace agreement," calling upon President Abbas to stop pursuing peace with Israel. (*AP, Reuters*)

At the White House, Saudi King Abdullah met with US President Obama. During a brief appearance with the King before the media, President Obama said, "We discussed the Middle East peace process and the importance of moving forward in a significant and bold way in securing a Palestinian homeland that can live side by side with a secure and prosperous Israeli State". (*DPA*)

US Special Envoy George Mitchell arrived in Israel for another round of talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. He was to meet Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu today and PA President Abbas on 1 July. (*Haaretz*)

A number of Indonesian parliamentarians arrived in the Gaza Strip this morning, on a visit that was only expected to last for six hours. (*IMEMC*)

Several Islamist activists in Yemen have launched a campaign to collect donations in order to prepare a Yemeni flotilla that would sail to Gaza to deliver humanitarian supplies. (*IMEMC*)

According to forensic examinations carried out in Turkey, all but two of the nine Turks killed in an Israeli raid on the Gaza aid flotilla had been shot more than once, and five had died from bullet wounds to the head. "The findings make it clear that the Israeli forces shot to kill the activists and not to overpower them," said Yasin Divrak one of the lawyers for the victims' families. (*AFP*)

Visiting Russian Federation Foreign Minister Lavrov met in Jerusalem with Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu. During the discussions, Mr. Netanyahu asked Moscow to take advantage of its relations with Hamas to push for a prisoner swap deal that would free IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. (*Haaretz*)

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Lavrov, on a visit to Jerusalem, said: "The economic development of Gaza cannot be achieved without direct regular contact with Hamas. The process is not easy, but if we are not dealing with this issue, we will not have any results." ([www.rt.com](#), *RIA Novosti*)

A Palestinian researcher specializing in detainees' affairs, and a former detainee himself, stated that there were currently 6,800 detainees imprisoned by Israel, including 300 children, 34 women, and 213 detainees in administrative detention. (*IMEMC*)

At a press conference organized by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee and Prime Minister Saad Hariri's office, Palestinian Ambassador to Lebanon Abdullah Abdullah said he hoped the growing debate among Lebanese parliamentarians would result in agreement on granting refugees living in Lebanon the right to medical care, employment, and property ownership. (*AFP*)

Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 [urged](#) Israel to prevent further violations of international law in East Jerusalem, most urgently in relation to the situation of four Palestinians threatened with the loss of their right of residency and the Mayor of Jerusalem's plan to demolish 22 buildings, representing 89 Palestinian homes, in the Silwan area of East Jerusalem. ([www.unog.ch](#))

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The military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for launching an RPG at an Israeli military bulldozer operating in the border area south of Gaza City. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Air Force jets struck three targets in the Gaza Strip. The IDF Spokesperson's Unit stated that the targets included a weapons factory in the northern Strip and a tunnel in southern Gaza. No injuries were reported. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu intensified calls for face-to-face peace talks with the Palestinians, pledging to visit Ramallah if PA President Abbas would come to Jerusalem. (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas launched his "popular peace campaign" to explain the PA positions to the Israelis. His aim was to enlist their support for a peace settlement based on the 1967 borders. Mr. Abbas met with six Israeli journalists in his Ramallah office. At the briefing, he said he was willing to enter direct negotiations with the Netanyahu Government, as soon as he heard from Mr. Netanyahu regarding Israel's position on borders and security issues. (*The Jerusalem Post, Haaretz*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that he was slated to meet with PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in the next few days, the highest-level bilateral meeting between the two sides in nearly 18 months. (*Xinhua*)

In Brussels, European Parliament member Bairbre de Brún called upon European Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn not to provide research funding for Israeli companies linked to technologies with military applications, including those used in the war in Gaza. (*Wafa*)

In Beitunia, near Ramallah, the EU Police Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) participated in the inauguration of the construction of three logistics compounds for the Palestinian Civil Police funded by the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development.

The €6 million project will include facilities in Ramallah, Nablus, and Hebron. (*Wafa*)

Palestinian Legislative Council member from Hamas Mohammed Abu Tir, slated for expulsion from East Jerusalem, was arrested by Israeli police after refusing to leave his home and now faces a court hearing over whether he could be forced to leave the city. (*AP*)

In Cairo, Egypt's President Mubarak held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. At a press conference with his Egyptian counterpart Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Mr. Lavrov said that the meeting included discussions on the importance of a return to direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, as well as reconciliation between Palestinian political entities. He said that Russia and Egypt "share a common stance towards the peace process and we are convinced that the key to peace efforts is in legitimate international resolutions". Mr. Aboul Gheit said that

President Mubarak strongly affirmed the idea of convening a ministerial meeting in Moscow that would include all parties in the peace process, suggested by Mr. Lavrov. *(AFP, DPA)*

After meeting with US Special Envoy George Mitchell in Jerusalem, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said he intended to meet PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in the coming days, to discuss political and security issues as well as the Palestinian boycott of settlements' goods and Palestinian activities against Israel in the international arena. He said that the objective of the meeting would also be to move the current indirect Israeli-Palestinian talks into direct negotiations. Mr. Fayyad's office confirmed the meeting would take place. *(AFP)*

Israel's first steps toward easing its blockade of the Gaza Strip were welcomed by US Special Envoy Mitchell, as he visited the crossing where goods were transferred to the Palestinian territory. "As President Obama said, the situation in Gaza was unsustainable and demanded fundamental change. We welcome these changes. As implementation proceeds, these arrangements should significantly improve conditions for Palestinians in Gaza," he said. *(The Washington Post)*

Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the [Palestinian] Territories (COGAT), Brig. Gen. Eitan Dangoth, notified the PA that starting today Israel would let in 150 trucks per day, a 50-per-cent increase over the number before the Government's decision to ease the civilian blockade on Gaza. Within weeks Israel planned to increase the number to 250 trucks, which would enter through the Kerem Shalom crossing. An additional 120 trucks would cross into Gaza through the Karni border terminal. *(Haaretz)*

In a statement, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton ~~said~~ settlements and demolitions of homes were illegal under international law, calling the planned demolition of 22 Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan "an obstacle to peace". *(www.consilium.europa.eu)*

The Detainees' Support Committee in Gaza called upon the Shalit family to continue pressuring the Israeli Government to secure the [prisoner swap].

The Shalit family was on a 12-day march to Jerusalem, where they planned to camp outside Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's residence until their son was returned home. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Israel was considering upgrading the mandate of its investigation of the attack on the Gaza aid flotilla by allowing it to subpoena witnesses, a statement from Prime Minister Netanyahu's office said. *(Reuters)*
