

Division for Palestinian Rights  
**Chronological Review of Events Relating to the  
 Question of Palestine**  
 Monthly media monitoring review  
 November 2008

**Monthly highlights**

- PA President Abbas rules out the possibility of peace agreement with Israel in 2008. ([2 November](#))
- Israel carries out military strikes in Gaza; militants fire rockets as ceasefire is breached. ([since 4 November](#))
- Hamas pulls out of the Palestinian national reconciliation talks in Cairo. ([8 November](#))
- The Quartet is briefed by Palestinian and Israeli leaders on the progress of peace talks. ([9 November](#))
- Israel blocks humanitarian and fuel supplies, prevents EU diplomats, journalists from entering Gaza. ([12](#) and [13 November](#))
- Israeli Defense Minister rebuffs calls by UN Secretary-General to allow humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. ([19 November](#))
- PLO launches media campaign in Israeli newspapers promoting the Arab Peace Initiative. ([20 November](#))
- PLO Central Council elects Mahmoud Abbas President of the future State of Palestine. ([23 November](#))
- International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is observed at the UN in New York, Geneva and Vienna. ([24 November](#))
- General Assembly adopts four resolutions on the question of Palestine. ([26 November](#))

**1**

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert H. Serry criticised Israel for demolishing Palestinian homes in the West Bank, calling the practice a violation of a six-month-old moratorium and a setback to peacemaking efforts. Mr. Serry deplored "the impact of these actions on some of the most vulnerable populations in the West Bank, with many poor families rendered destitute." The demolitions, Mr. Serry said, "send a discouraging signal regarding its [Israel's] support for the strenuous and concerted effort under way to improve conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and build greater trust and confidence in support for the political process". Yigal Palmor, a spokesperson for Israel's Foreign Ministry, said: "There was no public commitment by Israel to any moratorium on house demolitions. ... the fact that the UN addresses a generalized criticism on the demolition of houses built illegally on public land is most unhelpful." (*Reuters*)

**2**

The IDF killed an elderly Palestinian in Al-Yamoun village near Jenin while four Palestinians, including two children, were injured by Israeli gunfire in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. Israeli troops carried out 35 raids in the West Bank. They entered houses, conducted search operations and arrested 26 Palestinians, including 5 children. The IDF also razed areas of land in the Al-Amra natural reserve near Jenin and prevented Palestinian farmers from reaching their land to harvest olives. (*Wafa*)

Four Palestinians were killed and three went missing when an underground tunnel north of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt collapsed, according to information given by Hamas to Egyptian authorities about the incident. Four Palestinians were also injured and hospitalized after the collapse of another tunnel, according to Palestinian medical sources. (*Deutsche Press-Agentur (DPA)*)

At a press conference after meeting Jordan's King Abdulla II in Amman, PA President Mahmoud Abbas excluded the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with Israel before the end of 2008 as envisaged at the Annapolis conference in November 2007. "There is no possibility for working out a partial agreement, because we seek a comprehensive accord," Mr. Abbas said. (*DPA*)

At a Cabinet meeting, Shin Bet security service chief Yuval Diskin warned that an Israeli Government decision to evacuate more territory might lead to a large-scale violent conflict with settlers. The Cabinet meeting ended with the Ministers voting to end all Government support, both direct and indirect, for unauthorized outposts. Following the Cabinet vote, the Yesha Council of settlements termed the decision "scandalous and demagogic," saying there was "no connection" between the outposts and extremist violence. In addition to its decision on outposts, the Cabinet ordered a ministerial committee, headed by Defense Minister Ehud Barak, to submit recommendations within two weeks on how to tighten law enforcement. (*Haaretz*)

A Palestinian home was damaged when a group of young Israeli settlers pelted it with rocks and glass bottles. The house was located near the ruins of the "Fedeman Farm" outpost, which the IDF and Border Guard forces had twice evacuated and had demolished the previous week. ([www.Ynetnews.com](http://www.Ynetnews.com))

Three Palestinian prisoners were slightly injured when an electrical fire broke out in one of the tents in an Israeli prison camp in the Negev desert. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Kyriakos Triantaphyllides, head of the European Parliament delegation to Ramallah, expressed disappointment over Israel's refusal to allow the nine-member delegation to visit imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). In a press conference at the PLC in Ramallah, Mr. Triantaphyllides said the delegation's visit to the prisoners was pursuant to a European Parliament resolution. (*Wafa*)

**3**

Some six Palestinians were injured during clashes with Israeli troops who raided the Al-Far'a refugee camp north of Nablus. Three Palestinians were arrested at neighbouring towns as Israeli forces carried out a large-scale military operation. More than 40 military vehicles entered the camp area, and soldiers imposed a curfew, preventing Palestinians from leaving their homes to go to work and school. (*Ma'an News Agency, Wafa*)

The IDF arrested nine Palestinians from Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Jenin, Hebron and Bethlehem. (*IMEMC, Wafa*)

The Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt, Nabil Amr, announced that the Rafah Crossing would be opened from 4 November until 6 November to Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side, allowing them to return to the Gaza Strip. (Wafa)

Israeli and Palestinian officials said that Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Head of the Palestinian Negotiating Team Ahmad Qureia would give a joint briefing on the state of the peace talks at a Middle East summit sponsored by the Quartet to be held on 9 November in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt. Nimmer Hammad, a senior aid to PA President Abbas, said: "We want the Quartet to specify that the Palestinian State would be set up on 1967-occupied lands, with East Jerusalem as its capital, which should be presented to the new US administration to pursue the peace process from there. Any amendments to the 1967 borders should be agreed and should be very minor." (Reuters, [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com))

After hours of waiting at the Erez crossing, eight European Parliament members were permitted by Israeli border police to enter the Gaza Strip, said a Greek politician.

The parliamentarians had previously attempted to cross at the Rafah border, but were prevented from doing so by Egyptian guards, according to one of the lawmakers. The Parliament member reiterated that efforts must be made to end the blockade. (Ma'an News Agency)

The European parliamentary delegation visiting the Gaza Strip invited all democratically elected members of the PLC, including those belonging to Hamas, to visit the European Union Headquarters in Brussels in March 2009. (IMEMC, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

PA President Abbas met with Romanian President Trajan Basescu in Bucharest. The Romanian President confirmed his country's support for the peace process in the Middle East. (Wafa)

In her address to the party, Israel's Foreign Minister and Kadima Chair Tzipi Livni said that in the upcoming general elections, Israel would be deciding whether to continue or halt the current peace negotiations. Ms. Livni told Kadima members that the Likud, the main opposition party, was interested in "stopping all" peace moves, adding: "I don't believe that the Israeli public wants a complete halt to the peace process. Israel cannot make itself irrelevant." (Haaretz)

In Beirut, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal voiced support for upcoming national reconciliation talks with Fatah. "We are eager to make national reconciliation, scheduled to be held in Cairo, a success despite some problems facing it," Mr. Mashaal said. (AP)

Led by Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, a Hamas delegation from the Gaza Strip arrived in Egypt for talks with Egyptian mediators on a Cairo-proposed plan for an upcoming Palestinian national dialogue, Egypt's MENA news agency reported. (Xinhua)

Britain was taking the lead in pressing the EU to curb imports from Israeli producers in the West Bank settlements as a practical step towards halting the steady increase in the construction of settlements. An internal EU note circulated by the United Kingdom expressed concern that goods produced in the settlements might be entering Britain after having been illegally exempt from tariffs in violation of an Israel-EU trade agreement. In the note, the United Kingdom called for the EU separately to consider afresh much more stringent labelling rules for settlement-produced goods in British stores to prevent them from being designated as being from the "West Bank", which could falsely imply that they had a Palestinian origin. The Government proposed that other member States should follow its own example in conducting a "targeted" examination of goods imported from Israel to establish whether they were in fact produced inside the 1967 Green Line. The United Kingdom complained that, at the 2007 summit in Annapolis, Israel had committed to "freeze all settlement activity". Instead, "there has been an acceleration in settlement construction activity since Annapolis." (The Independent)

In a report published by Yesh Din, the human rights group criticized the Israeli Government for its "faulty" methods of dealing with settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. The report stated that only 8 per cent of Palestinian complaints of settler violence resulted in indictments. The report charged that the State prosecution office tended to "sweepingly accept the decisions of the police and district attorneys to close cases ... often due to lack of reliable evidence".

(Haaretz)

Settlers stoned a number of Palestinians and international activists near the "Harsina" settlement in Hebron, seriously injuring three. The incident followed the eviction of settlers from an outpost known as "Federman Farm". Masked settlers attacked Palestinian houses twice, arriving from neighbouring vineyards. Five international activists and the mother of the owner of one of the houses were injured when 15 armed settlers broke into the home. Violent riots had erupted and threats had been made against security forces after the evacuation and demolition of the settlement outpost some 10 days earlier. Since then, settlers have set up temporary structures in place of the razed buildings. (IMEMC, Wafa, Ynetnews)

A group of settlers led by Baruch Marzel burned a Palestinian flag in the centre of Hebron. The settlers threatened to burn any person carrying a Palestinian flag. Local residents indicated that Israeli policemen and soldiers who had been heavily deployed in the area made no attempt to intervene. Another settler threatened to pursue the IDF Commander for the West Bank, Brig.-Gen. Noam Tibon, "wherever he goes." Mr. Tibon had cancelled his visit to settlements citing schedule constraints. (IMEMC)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called on the Quartet to declare a clear-cut position against the ongoing settlement activities by Israel as well as attacks by settlers against Palestinian civilians and farmers across the West Bank. (IMEMC)

IDF bulldozers backed by police forces tore down four makeshift structures located outside the "Migron" outpost in the Ramallah area, a military spokesman said. There were no immediate reports of violence following the destruction of the structures. Meanwhile, Defense Minister Barak vowed that the IDF would continue cracking down on illegal outposts and settler violence in the West Bank. (AFP)

4

The IDF arrested seven Palestinians in West Bank cities, including Tulkarm and Jenin, and the area of Bethlehem. (IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency)

Israel carried out an air strike on the Gaza Strip after its troops clashed with Hamas gunmen along the border in the first such confrontation since the June ceasefire. IDF special forces had entered the area to blow up a tunnel dug by Hamas for allegedly kidnapping IDF soldiers. Six Palestinians were killed in the clashes, and seven soldiers were wounded. A military source said that the attack tunnel was ready for "imminent use," describing it as a "ticking tunnel" for kidnapping soldiers. (AP, The Jerusalem Post)

Six Palestinians were arrested by Israeli soldiers during an incursion in the Gaza Strip at the Al-Maghazi refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip. Israeli forces destroyed two houses belonging to two of those arrested. (Ma'an News Agency)

The PA called on Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem to boycott the upcoming municipal elections on 11 November since voting would constitute de facto recognition of the Israeli occupation of the city. Several Palestinian political figures from Jerusalem decided to refrain from voting in the elections saying it would constitute a violation of international legitimacy given that East Jerusalem was occupied territory. In Ramallah, a Palestinian official said the participation of East Jerusalemites in the election "would give Israel a pretext to claim that Jerusalem had become the united capital of Israel", adding that "elections in Jerusalem were a dangerous political issue because today President Abbas is negotiating the future of Jerusalem with Israel." (AFP, AP, DPA, Wafa)

During a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni stated that "the Israeli public supported and will continue to support the diplomatic process on condition that it ensures the diplomatic and security interests that are important to Israel in the long run." She added that "the world needed to back the process being conducted and not ask Israel for shortcuts that will harm its ability to secure its needs." (DPA, Ynetnews)

The Union for the Mediterranean concluded its ministerial meeting in Marseille with an agreement under which both the Palestinian Authority and Israel would hold Deputy Secretary-General posts. (AP)

Israeli authorities issued 15 demolition orders to the residents of the Khalet Ibrahim neighbourhood in Hebron. (IMEMC)

Israeli companies stopped providing cement to the Gaza Strip on orders of the Israeli military. Cement was among the few items whose import was allowed into the Gaza Strip after the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect in June 2008, at rates which met only 10 per cent of actual needs. (Xinhua)

It was reported today that on 2 October, the Israeli Ministerial Committee on the Non-Jewish Sector had decided that tens of thousands of illegally built Arab-owned homes in East Jerusalem would be officially connected to the municipal water system for the first time. The severe water shortage in the homes built without permits which housed an estimated 160,000 people had been giving rise to major sanitation problems. According to the municipal water company, Hagihon, only some 85,000 out of East Jerusalem's estimated 250,000 Palestinian residents were connected to the water system. (Haaretz)

Egyptian authorities opened the Rafah crossing point with the Gaza Strip to allow patients, students as well as Arab and foreign passport holders to leave the Gaza Strip. Palestinian sources indicated that ambulances and buses had been made available to transport some 460 patients. The crossing point would remain open until 6 November. (Ma'an News Agency, Wafa)

Settlers resumed construction of the "Migron" outpost near Ramallah, in the West Bank. The IDF had destroyed the outpost a few months earlier, in keeping with the pledge given by the Government of Israel during the Annapolis meeting. (Wafa)

In Hebron, settlers had a verbal altercation with the Deputy President of a European Union parliamentary delegation, Luisa Morgantini. Israeli soldiers sealed the

area around the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Tomb of the Patriarchs), thereby preventing Ms. Morgantini from meeting with a group of Israeli activists nearby who were staging a demonstration at the Abu Ar-Reish checkpoint in the city. The previous day, Israeli forces prevented the leader of the European Parliament's Green Party and member of the EU Foreign Relations Committee, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, from touring the Old City of Hebron under the pretext that it was under curfew. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli police stopped the car of the Head of the Palestinian Negotiating Team, Ahmad Qureia, for an extended period of time near the settlement of "Ma'aleh Adumim" near Jerusalem. It was reported that police checked Mr. Qureia's documents and the car registration "in a provocative way." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A high-level World Bank delegation and Chairman of the Palestinian Water Authority Shaddad Attili visited northern Gaza to launch an emergency sewage treatment project that had long been delayed by Israel's blockade. "This project ... averts a potential human and environmental disaster in Beit Lahia. The success of this project entails continued donor collaboration and close coordination with the Israelis," said Daniela Gressani, World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa region. "This project is a key example of how all sides can work together to alleviate the situation in the Palestinian Territories, particularly in Gaza," Quartet Representative Tony Blair said in a statement. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

5

Militants in the Gaza Strip fired 35 rockets at the western Negev before dawn, in what they said was retaliation "for Israeli aggression in the central and eastern Gaza Strip which killed six and wounded dozens of civilians." Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rockets. Hamas blamed Israel for operating in Gaza with the intention of thwarting Palestinian reconciliation efforts, and said that it had asked Egypt to help return calm to Gaza's border with Israel. Two rockets fell in Ashkelon, one of which hit a residential neighbourhood, sending three people into shock. Despite the outbreak of violence, both Israeli authorities and Hamas officials said they wanted to restore the calm that had largely prevailed over the past five months. (*AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

An Israeli air strike killed a member of Islamic Jihad and wounded three other Palestinians east of the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, medical officials and witnesses said. An Israeli military spokesman confirmed the attack saying it was aimed at a group launching missiles at southern Israel. (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency*)

In East Jerusalem, Israel bulldozed two houses in the Shu'fat neighbourhood and a celebration hall in Beit Hanina, with more houses still being demolished in the Wadi Helwa and Al-Bustan neighbourhoods in Silwan village, south of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Police said they were trying to disperse a violent protest by Palestinians trying to block the demolition. Police spokesman Mickey Rosenfeld said authorities were in the area to take down a house that had been built illegally.

A crowd gathered and began pelting the police with stones. Since 2004, Israel had levelled more than 300 homes in Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhoods. (*Haaretz, Wafa*)

PA President Abbas congratulated US President-elect Barack Obama in the name of the Palestinian people. He hoped that Mr. Obama "will speed up efforts to achieve peace, particularly since a resolution of the Palestinian problem and the Israeli-Arab conflict is key to world peace," according to Mr. Abbas' aide Nabil Abu Rudeineh. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa urged US President-elect Obama to act swiftly to try to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mr. Moussa said Mr. Obama's call for change was needed in the Middle East to ease tensions between Arabs and Israelis and to resolve the nuclear standoff with Iran. He said Mr. Obama must bring "a policy of honest brokers" to the region. (*AP*)

Gaza Strip crossings had been closed until further notice, Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak said. (*Ynetnews*)

Roy Dickinson, European Commission Head of Operations in Jerusalem, announced that the EU would donate €15 million to the PA towards the payment of salaries and pensions. "Through PEGASE, the European Union and its member States have worked closely with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to help him insure that PA civil servants have been paid in full and on time every month for the longest uninterrupted period in PA's history," he said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The World Bank announced the launch of a new trust fund to encourage investors and to insure investments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The fund is co-sponsored by the European Investment Bank, the Government of Japan and the Palestinian Authority, and will be administered by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, the political risk insurance arm of the World Bank Group. ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org))

6

Gaza militants fired two Qassam rockets at the western Negev. No injuries were reported. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli troops opened fire on British, American and Italian volunteers helping to harvest olives in the Gaza Strip near the border with Israel. No injuries were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli military detained eight Palestinians in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Hebron. (*IMEMC*)

The Israeli military said it had launched an investigation after *Channel 10* television had aired a video showing soldiers humiliating a bound and blindfolded Palestinian prisoner. (*AP*)

Israeli forces stopped at gunpoint Egyptian Ambassador Ashraf Aqel and Tunisian Ambassador Ahmad Habbas from entering the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Mosque (the Tomb of the Patriarchs) during their visit to the Hebron area with a delegation, the diplomats said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

"We will not extend this lull as long as the occupation does not commit itself to all its articles, mainly the lifting of the siege and the opening of the crossings," said Abu Obaida, spokesman for the armed wing of Hamas. Israel's Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai told *Israel Army Radio*: "We hope the truce can again be applied, we believe in this truce and it looks like things are calming down." (*AFP, Xinhua*)

An Israeli military judge said he would not pursue harsher charges against two Israeli soldiers in the case of a point-blank shooting of a handcuffed Palestinian protestor in Ni'lin. A coalition of Israeli human rights groups had sought tougher charges against those responsible. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said upon arriving in Israel: "It is our expectation that the Annapolis process has laid the groundwork which should make possible the establishment of a Palestinian State when the political circumstances permit." Ms. Rice added, "I think that whatever happens by the end of the year, you've got a firm foundation for quickly moving this forward to conclusion." She is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas, along with their Chief Negotiators, before visiting Jenin. She will then travel to Sharm el-Sheikh for the Quartet meeting. (*AP*)

Egyptian authorities opened the Rafah crossing on the border with the Gaza Strip for the third day in a row, *MENA* news agency reported. Official sources said that more than 1,000 Palestinians stranded on both sides were expected to use the crossing. (*Xinhua*)

7

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired four Qassam rockets at Israel's western Negev region. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Haaretz*)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Ramallah after meeting with PA President Abbas: "[Palestinians] are dignified people and I am certain the day is coming soon when they will have a State that will be in accordance with that great national dignity... Settlement activity is inconsistent with the atmosphere that really helps promote negotiations, and the parties' actions should encourage confidence, not undermine it... The United States will not consider settlement activity to affect any final status negotiations, including final borders." (*AFP*)

The French Foreign Ministry announced that Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner would represent the European Union at the Quartet meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on 9 November. (*AFP*)

Hamas Political Bureau member Izzat al-Rishq said that Hamas would boycott the Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation talks unless Fatah halted a campaign of "arrests and repression" against the group in the West Bank. "It is impossible for Hamas to participate in the dialogue with a single prisoner remaining in Abbas' jails," he added. (*Reuters*)

8

The Israeli Air Force destroyed a remote-operated rocket launcher in the northern Gaza Strip which was set up to fire at Israel. No one was injured during the operation. Earlier in the day, IDF soldiers exchanged fire with Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip. (*AP*)

The Egyptian authorities informed Palestinian delegates to the planned national dialogue that the internal Palestinian talks were being postponed at the request of Hamas. (*IMEMC*)

The Hamas leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said that his "government" was willing to accept a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, meaning the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, and to offer Israel a long-term "hudna" or truce, if Israel recognized the Palestinians' national rights. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

A third Free Gaza boat, with a number of parliamentarians from European countries, Arab leaders, human rights activists and journalists, anchored in Gaza. The aim of the trip was to break the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip so that Gazans could move freely in and out of the territory. (*IMEMC*)

Palestinians said that a six-year-old Palestinian boy was hospitalized with moderate wounds after being beaten on the head with a stone by settler children in Hebron,

which the settlers denied. The boy was attacked at the so-called "Worshippers' Way," which connects the "Kiryat Arba" settlement to the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Tomb of the Patriarchs). He was first treated for wounds by IDF soldiers before being delivered to Palestinian authorities. (*Haaretz*)

9

A Qassam rocket fired from northern Gaza landed around 11 p.m. in an open field in the area of the western Negev. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Ynetnews*)

Defense Minister Ehud Barak urged the Israeli Cabinet to consider the use of counter-fire in response to Qassam rockets fired at Israel. (*Haaretz*, *IMEMC*)

Senior Hamas officials indicated that there was currently no room to implement a long-term ceasefire with Israel, since "there was no one to talk to about this proposal on the other [Israeli] side." (*Haaretz*, *IMEMC*, *The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli forces arrested three students from the Al-Quds Open University while they participated in a solidarity march in Hebron aimed at ending the closure of the Old City. Palestinian dignitaries participating in the march were also harassed as they made their way to the city centre and were not allowed to enter the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Tomb of the Patriarchs). (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians in the Nur Shams refugee camp near Tulkarm. Two others were arrested near Bethlehem; 1 in the area of Jenin; 11 in the area of Ramallah; and 12 in the Bethlehem area. (*IMEMC*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

In spite of a formal protest by the US Government in July 2008, scores of Israeli soldiers and police evicted the Al-Kurd family from their home in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem in which they had lived for the past 52 years, on the basis of the High Court of Israel ruling saying that the family did not own the plot of land on which the house was built. The area was then declared a "closed military zone". One section of the home was already inhabited by a settler family based on a court decision handed down four years ago, in conjunction with the implementation of the E-1 plan for Jerusalem. According to Fawziyah Al-Kurd, the police broke into her home at 4 a.m., put her in handcuffs and dragged her and her husband, Mohammad, out of their house. Eight international activists who were camping in their garden were arrested during the operation and subsequently released. They were expected to be deported and denied future entry into Israel. (*IMEMC*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *Ynetnews*)

The Quartet met in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and called on the international community to put its full weight behind Israel and the Palestinians in their efforts to resolve their long-running conflict. The two sides reported that current negotiations were "substantial and promising." PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told the Quartet that they had succeeded in securing a solid negotiating structure for continued progress. Outlining the key guiding principles, they said that negotiations must remain continuous, uninterrupted, direct and bilateral, and that nothing would be considered agreed until everything was agreed, adding that they needed to reach a comprehensive agreement addressing all the issues, rather than announcing an agreement on selected items in isolation.

The Quartet issued a [statement](#), in which it reiterated its commitment to supporting the parties and called on all states to adhere to these same commitments ... [and] lend their diplomatic and political support to that end, including by encouraging and recognizing progress to date." The same day, Ms. Livni stated that "we recognize the need to establish a Palestinian State, provided that it will not be a terror State," while Mr. Abbas emphasized the need to reactivate the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, adding that "peace negotiations with Israel will continue until February 2009 in order to inject a momentum to the peace process." (*Haaretz*, *IMEMC*, *Wafa*, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org))

It was reported that the Gaza Strip was experiencing partial electricity blackouts since the power supply had been reduced by 33 per cent owing to the cut-off of fuel shipments to the Gaza City power plant from Israel, its sole provider. Shipments of fuel, transmitted mainly through the Nahal Oz crossing, had been stopped after all border crossings into Gaza were closed on the orders of the Israeli Defense Minister in response to the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip. It was estimated that the Gaza City electricity plant, which supplied up to 40 per cent of the Strip's needs, would run out of fuel the following day if shipments were not resumed, causing a blackout in the whole territory, including its hospitals. Palestinian officials estimated that some 750,000 to 800,000 persons would be affected and described the policy as collective punishment. The closure of the crossings had been maintained after a rocket was fired into southern Israel the previous day. Israeli military spokesman Peter Lerner indicated that the crossings would open only for humanitarian reasons and that journalists would be allowed to leave but not to enter. (*AP*, *AFP*, *BBC*, *Haaretz*, *IMEMC*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Ma'an News Agency*, *Xinhua*, *Ynetnews*)

The Israeli Central Court in Tel Aviv sentenced to a one-year prison term an Israeli border guard, Tomer Avraha, who had killed a Palestinian worker, Eyad Abu Raeyya, from Tarqumiya village near Hebron. Mr. Abu Raeyya was one of three undocumented Palestinian workers who were arrested at a construction site in Jaffa. They were handcuffed and blindfolded before being punched, clubbed and kicked by the police. Tomer Avraha shot and killed Abu Raeyya, later claiming that the bullet was fired by mistake due to the "heat of the moment." (*IMEMC*)

10

Israeli forces arrested 11 Palestinians in Hebron, Bethlehem and Jenin. In addition, three workers from the Nablus area were beaten with stones by Israeli soldiers and suffered broken bones. (*Ma'an News Agency*, *Wafa*)

At least three Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed in the western Negev, two on the outskirts of Sderot, causing no casualties or damage. (*The Jerusalem Post*, *Xinhua*, *Ynetnews*)

Border crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel had remained closed since 5 November. Defense Minister Barak announced that Israel had decided to keep the crossings closed, including for the fuel shipments to Gaza. In addition, no journalists were being allowed to enter the Gaza Strip. The Foreign Press Association in Israel said that the restrictions were a "serious violation of press freedom". (*AP*, *BBC*, *Haaretz*, *IMEMC*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Wafa*, *Xinhua*)

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa, called for an emergency meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, also questioning a statement by the Quartet that the talks were "promising" despite "gaps and obstacles". He wanted to know what that meant.

The same day, outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Olmert stated, during a commemoration of the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, that if "we are determined to maintain a Jewish and democratic Israel, we must concede parts of the homeland we have prayed for and dreamt of for generations, as well as Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, and return to the State of Israel in 1967 with amendments." He cautioned that time was running out for a two-State solution. (*AFP*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Reuters*, *Ynetnews*)

The French Presidency of the European Union firmly criticized Israel and expressed "deep concern" at the demolition of Arab-owned houses in several parts of East Jerusalem carried out in recent days. The European Union "recalled that these operations, which seriously affect the life of the residents of these areas, are illegal under international law and called on the Israeli authorities to put an end to them as soon as possible." The European Union urged Israel "to refrain from all unilateral measures that may prejudice the result of the final status negotiations, particularly in Jerusalem" (*DPA*, *Ma'an News Agency*)

The European Commission announced that it would allocate €1.5 million in humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable Palestinian communities, including Bedouins, farmers, shepherds and marginalized communities in Area C of the West Bank. The funding package would help meet the vital needs of some 100,000 Palestinians who have been affected by severe climatic conditions that destroyed between 70 and 100 per cent of open fields and have caused extreme water shortages in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (*Wafa*)

11

Israeli forces detained nine Palestinians in and around Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces fired tear gas on schoolchildren from Al-Ma'sara village, south of Bethlehem, during a demonstration in honour of Yasser Arafat, while another unit attacked several schools in the town of Tuqu. Israeli soldiers arrested two Palestinians in Hebron and two others in Jerusalem. They also seized a Palestinian in Jenin amid heavy gunfire. (*Wafa*)

Preparations for a two-week PA security campaign in Areas B and C of the West Bank in advance of Christmas and Eid al-Adha were under way, the Governor of Bethlehem, Salah Ta'mari, and Police Commander Sulaiman Umran told a news conference. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Speaking at a memorial in Ramallah for the late Yasser Arafat, PA President Abbas reiterated the importance of a national unity Government, which he said would be able to lift the siege on Gaza and prepare for presidential and legislative elections. He said that Palestinians should hold a referendum on the issue of elections. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni dismissed as irrelevant a policy statement issued by Prime Minister Olmert in which he had called for a return to the 1967 borders, with some changes. "As the head of the Kadima party, I am obligated not to the outgoing words of Olmert, but to Kadima's platform, which I wrote and which I believe in," she said in an interview with *Israel Army Radio*. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

After an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory within the framework of an overall peace agreement, foreign forces could be stationed there for a specific period, Secretary-General of the Arab League Amre Moussa told *Haaretz* in an interview. He said it was acceptable to PA President Abbas, and added



that Israel could withdraw in stages from the Golan Heights and the West Bank, so long as the withdrawal adhered to a reasonable schedule, anchored in a Security Council decision. He ruled out the possibility of the Arab League negotiating with Israel on the overall peace agreement, noting that the League supported serious bilateral negotiations. If Israel froze settlement construction and took substantive measures against unauthorized outposts, the Arab League's door would be open for additional steps and gestures, beyond the Peace Initiative itself, Mr. Moussa said. The time was nearing when the Arabs would demand a decision: either Israel dismantles the settlements or the Arab League declares that there was no possibility of establishing a Palestinian State, he said. (*Haaretz*)

Israel renewed fuel deliveries to the Gaza Strip after a week-long suspension of supplies that had led to blackouts in the territory. The head of the Power Authority in the Gaza Strip, Kan'an Ubeid, said that the fuel transferred would enable the power station to operate for approximately 30 hours, after which blackouts would start again. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) announced that it would be forced to halt food distribution to over 750,000 refugees in the Gaza Strip by 14 November unless the food aid waiting to be delivered through the closed Gaza crossings was transferred into the Strip soon. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Dutch news photographer Dirk Jan Visser was denied entry into the Gaza Strip by Israeli authorities, as were *BBC* journalist Aleem Maqbool and his colleague. A French journalist was denied permission to leave Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A group of European lawmakers said that they would petition the European Union to suspend a preferential trade agreement with Israel because of what they described as its "cruel" blockade of Gaza. Lord Nazir Ahmed, a Muslim member of Britain's House of Lords, said Gaza's 1.4 million residents faced a dire situation because the siege had deprived them of medical supplies. Lord Ahmed was among 11 lawmakers from Britain, Ireland, Switzerland and Italy who sailed in the previous week to Gaza from Cyprus on a yacht owned by the US-based Free Gaza activist group, in defiance of an Israeli blockade. Clare Short, a former member of the British Cabinet, said Israel was punishing Gaza residents for voting Hamas to power. (*AP*)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People met to consider the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and developments in the political process, and approved four draft resolutions, by consensus, on the question of Palestine. (*UN press release GA/PAL/1099*)

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Israeli forces demolished two houses in the village of Shaqba, west of Ramallah, due to "lack of building permits". A total of 18 people had lived in the two homes. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired mortar shells and at least three Qassam rockets at the western Negev, causing no damage or injuries, according to *Israel Army Radio*. (*Haaretz*)

Four Palestinian militants were killed and an Israeli soldier was wounded along the Gaza border. The Israeli army said that militants had also fired several mortar rounds into Israel and that it had conducted two air strikes just inside Gaza. Witnesses said that the four dead Palestinians had been members of Hamas. An Israeli army spokesperson said soldiers had exchanged fire with gunmen who attempted to place an explosive device near the border fence in the central Gaza Strip. (*AFP*)

Israeli forces seized a 23-year-old Palestinian east of Bethlehem. In Nablus, Israeli forces seized three Palestinians affiliated with the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli police forced about 20 foreign diplomats from Europe, Latin America and the Far East to cut short a walking tour of the Israeli-controlled sector of Hebron, said Jose de la Cruz, a representative of Chile. The group was escorted by PA Foreign Minister Riyad Malki. The incident began when the diplomats, accompanied by the Palestinian Governor of Hebron, were walking through downtown Hebron. At one point, several settlers and Israeli security forces arrived. Mr. de la Cruz said police then told the visitors they could not proceed. "They simply put a number of people and cars across the road, so we couldn't continue, and they didn't accept our credentials as diplomats," he said in a telephone interview. The Israeli military said the tour had been coordinated with Israeli authorities. The Israeli Foreign Ministry initially said the tour had not been coordinated, and then said permission had only been given for a visit to a holy shrine in Hebron. (*AP*)

Israel opened its fuel crossing point with the Gaza Strip but closed it again after less than 230,000 litres were delivered, UN officials reported. The Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) said that if no industrial fuel deliveries were allowed the following day, Gaza's power plant would have to be switched off that weekend. UNSCO also said that there were concerns in Gaza over the growing shortage of cooking gas and a number of bakeries had been forced to shut down, which might lead to a shortage of bread. UNRWA, on its part, said that the current blockade of Gaza was affecting its operations "as never before." Materials prevented from entering Gaza included linens for a centre for blind children, textbooks for young students and fire extinguishers. (*UN News Centre*)

The PLO Executive Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the Egyptian initiative for Palestinian national dialogue. The Committee held Hamas responsible for the postponement of the conference in Cairo and called on Hamas to retract its unreasonable conditions and claims in order to pursue the dialogue. (*Wafa*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad addressed the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the culture of peace, calling on Saudi Arabia's leader and the General Assembly to help bring an end to "the chains of occupation and injustice, which have brought nothing but hatred, fear, and intolerance to our land". He said that the occupation of Jerusalem over the last four decades had altered the character and status of the Holy City through the harassment of Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim. He urged the international community to support the Arab Peace Initiative, which provided broad prospects to end the conflict and establish peace and harmony. Israel's President Shimon Peres said that the Arab Peace Initiative must be seriously considered as "a serious opening for real progress" in Middle East peace. (*UN press release GA/10782*)

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) [announced](#) that it had developed a customized proposal for an "aftercare" strategy to retain and expand private investment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. With just \$27 million in average annual inflows of foreign direct investment to the territory since 2002, there was a need to take care of existing foreign and domestic investors, UNCTAD said. (*Press release UNCTAD/PRESS/IN/2008/027*)

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) condemned Israel's decision to deny foreign journalists entry into Gaza for one week. "Once again, Israel has shown its disregard for press freedom by restricting the right of foreign journalists to move freely," said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. ([www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org))

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Rockets fired by Gaza militants struck near Ashkelon and Netivot in Israel. No one was wounded and there was no property damage. (*AP*)

The League of Arab States would hold an emergency meeting of foreign ministers on 26 November to discuss the current situation in the Middle East peace process, Hisham Youssef, Director of Secretary-General Amre Moussa's office, said. (*Xinhua*)

Switzerland condemned the destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and said it had made representations to the Israeli Foreign Ministry on the issue. The Swiss Foreign Ministry said it was "deeply worried" and called on "the Israeli Government to put an immediate end to operations of destruction carried out under the name of administrative demolition. "East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In accordance with international humanitarian law, Israel is obliged to look after the protection of the population," the Ministry said. (*AFP, Haaretz*)

Upon orders of Defense Minister Ehud Barak, the IDF kept all Gaza-Israel border crossings shut after receiving intelligence reports of a planned attack at the Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom) crossing, *Israel Radio* reported. Hours earlier, Israel blocked humanitarian supplies from entering Gaza. Israel also held up shipments of European Union-funded fuel to Gaza's only power plant. Palestinian officials said that the facility would be shut down later in the day. Israel also prevented a delegation of Consuls-General from 20 EU countries from entering Gaza. They had planned to meet with local businesspeople and human rights activists in order to learn about the humanitarian situation in the area. (*Haaretz*)

UNRWA said that its stocks had run so low that it would not be able to make its next delivery of food due to reach 750,000 needy Gazans on 15 November. John Ging, Director of UNRWA operations in Gaza, said: "We've been working here from hand to mouth for quite a long time, so these interruptions on the crossing points affect us immediately". Speaking in Brussels, UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd said it was unusual for Israel not to let basic food and medicines in. "This has alarmed us more than usual because it's never been quite so long and so bad, and there has never been so much negative response to what we need," she said. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF ruled it would court martial four infantrymen who had been filmed verbally abusing a bound and blindfolded Palestinian at what was believed to be a checkpoint in the West Bank, according to *Channel 10*. IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi ordered an investigation into the incident. (*AFP, BBC, Haaretz*)

14

Israeli aircraft fired missiles at targets in the northern Gaza Strip, injuring two Palestinian militants. Militants fired rockets into Israel. One person in Sderot was injured by shrapnel. Rockets hit near the Israeli town of Ashkelon, 15 kilometres from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said Palestinians had launched at least

four Grad-type rockets into Ashkelon. No injuries were reported. Hamas claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, and said it had fired deep into Israel to demonstrate the price Israel would pay if the truce collapsed. The barrages followed an earlier strike by Israeli aircraft targeting militants firing rockets in the northern Gaza Strip. Moaiya Hassanain of Gaza's Health Ministry said two gunmen had been moderately wounded. (AP, BBC)

At least four Palestinians were injured by rubber-coated bullets and dozens inhaled tear gas fired by Israeli soldiers at an anti-wall demonstration in Ni'lin, near Ramallah. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces seized six Palestinians in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, issued the following statement: "I am extremely concerned about the violence that has recently returned to Gaza and the surrounding area and threatens to end the truce. The truce has allowed Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make progress in negotiations and Egypt to seek to broker Palestinian reconciliation. A return to violence is a step back for all concerned. I therefore appeal to all parties to exercise restraint and to respect the truce that has held since June. It is imperative for calm to be restored." ([www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu))

The spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement:

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Gaza and southern Israel, and at the potential for further suffering and violence. He calls on all parties to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law.

The Secretary-General reiterates his condemnation of rocket attacks. He calls for an end to such attacks and urges full respect by all parties of the calm that has been in effect since 19 June 2008. The Secretary-General is concerned that food and other life saving assistance is being denied to hundreds of thousands of people, and emphasizes that measures which increase the hardship and suffering of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip as a whole are unacceptable and should cease immediately. In particular, he calls on Israel to allow urgently, the steady and sufficient supply of fuel and humanitarian assistance. He also calls on Israel to resume facilitating the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and all humanitarian agencies, including through unimpeded access for United Nations officials and humanitarian workers.

(UN press release SG/SM/11926)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad met with French Prime Minister François Fillon and Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in Paris. The French officials congratulated the PA on its accomplishments in the fields of security, institution building and ensuring government transparency. (Ma'an News Agency, [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr))

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has approved dozens of construction projects in the West Bank in recent months, contradicting Israel's commitments to the Road Map. Some of the permits had been granted in settlements to the east of the separation wall, which were beyond the areas Israel defined as "settlement blocks" and said it wanted to retain following a permanent agreement with the Palestinians. The Defense Ministry did not respond to Haaretz' query on the matter. (Haaretz)

In a message sent by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) held in Monaco, he urged Mediterranean nations to "play an active role" in supporting the peace process in Palestine, as well as in other regional conflicts. "The need for dialogue, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence, as individuals and nations, is clear. Israelis and Palestinians are engaged in vigorous negotiations to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues. ... These are important developments. But they remain fragile," the message said. (Ma'an News Agency)

Residents of the north and central Gaza Strip, including all of Gaza City, spent the night in total darkness after power was shut off due to Israel's refusal to allow fuel supplies to pass through the border. Alarms sounded from mosques and police cars around the Strip warning Palestinians that power from the local plant would stop. Residents rushed into the dark streets to buy candles and lanterns. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel kept the crossings into the Gaza Strip sealed for a tenth straight day, forcing the UN to suspend its food aid distribution to 750,000 Gaza residents because its warehouses had run out of food, according to John Ging, Director of UNRWA Gaza operations. (AP, Xinhua)

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union issued the following statement:

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union condemns the resumption of violence, particularly the rocket strikes from Gaza, and calls for its immediate end. However, the Presidency deplores the Israeli Government's decision to close border crossings into Gaza. This disproportionate response will again collectively punish the entire civilian population in Gaza where the humanitarian situation is deeply worrying.

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union therefore calls for the re-opening of border crossings and the immediate resumption of fuel and humanitarian supplies.

In this context, the Presidency also deplores the refusal to allow the European heads of mission, including the French Consul General in Jerusalem who is the EU Presidency's local representative, to visit Gaza during a field trip to assess the humanitarian and economic situation yesterday.

([www.ue2008.fr](http://www.ue2008.fr))

In a statement, EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner said, "International law requires the provision of access to essential services such as electricity and clear water to the civilian population. I am profoundly concerned about the consequences for the Gazan population of the complete closure of all Gaza crossings for deliveries of fuel and basic humanitarian assistance." (AFP, <http://www.reliefweb.int>)

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued a [statement](#) unreservedly condemning Israel's decision to seal the borders with the Gaza Strip, preventing the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance, including food, medical supplies and fuel. "The Bureau calls on the Israeli Government to immediately lift the siege on the Gaza Strip and allow humanitarian assistance to enter in order to help alleviate the plight of Gaza's residents, including women, children and the elderly, who have borne the brunt of the suffering brought about by months of closures. The Bureau of the Committee reminds Israel in most resolute terms that, as the occupying Power, it has a clear responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect and ensure the well-being of the civilian population under its occupation," the Bureau of the Committee said. (UN press release GA/PAL/1100)

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Settlers attacked Palestinian shepherds near Hebron, killed one donkey and injured two international activists who were accompanying the locals. (Ma'an News Agency)

16

An Israeli air strike killed four Palestinians from the Popular Resistance Committees as they were firing mortars at Israel from the Gaza Strip. At sundown, a rocket launched from Gaza hit a house under construction in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, slightly injuring a resident, police and media reports said. Palestinians had launched two other rockets earlier in the day but no one was hurt, the Israeli military said. (AP)

Israeli forces raided Nablus and detained an 18-year-old Palestinian affiliated with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Also, Israeli forces seized a number of Palestinian boys under the age of 13 in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, for confronting Jerusalem municipality workers preparing to demolish houses in the area. (Ma'an News Agency)

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband arrived in the region for talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told Mr. Miliband, "Israel cannot just watch its citizens being attacked.... The international community cannot turn a blind eye." According to his spokesperson, Mr. Miliband and Prime Minister Olmert had "a clear exchange of views" on the issue of Israeli exports to the EU manufactured in settlements. "The Foreign Secretary made it clear that Britain was not trying to move the goalposts on the agreement but rather to follow up on representations which have been made to us on the workings of the system," she said. (AFP)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in its [situation report](#): “Since 5 November, Israel has blocked all commercial and humanitarian goods from entering into Gaza with the exception of two days when some industrial fuel was allowed in. Civilians continue to pay the price of the conflict and violence and their access to humanitarian assistance is at stake. Today, Israel allowed 33 truckloads including 21 for humanitarian aid agencies to enter Gaza. UNRWA, which was allowed to enter eight trucks, announced that as of Tuesday, it will resume its food distribution. The agency needs a minimal of 15 trucks each day to sustain normal humanitarian operations. While this is a positive step, the amount entered is insufficient to meet the needs of all the civilians dependent on humanitarian assistance.” ([www.ochaopt.org/](http://www.ochaopt.org/))

17

Israeli forces detained 14 Palestinians from Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron and the Jordan Valley. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

At least six rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed in the Negev desert in Israel without causing any casualties, police said. Islamic Jihad's armed wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, claimed responsibility. (*AFP, AP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel allowed 33 truckloads of supplies into the Gaza Strip for the first time in two weeks. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert assured PA President Abbas that he would not permit a humanitarian crisis to develop there. International aid groups said that the supplies sent were not enough to alleviate food shortages. (*Haaretz*)

France [expressed](#) concern about the grave humanitarian situation of civilians in Gaza. It called on all the parties to comply in full with the truce reached in June. ([www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/))

PA Prime Minister Fayyad said that the PA had informally asked EU countries to clamp down on imports of goods made in Israeli settlements, shortly before meeting in Ramallah with visiting British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. Mr. Miliband told a joint news conference with PA President Abbas: “The British position is for the fair and proper implementation of the agreements on produce from this region... That means preferential trade for Israeli products, preferential trade for Palestinian products, but not preferential trade from the settlements.” (*AP*)

Roy Dickinson, the European Commission's Head of Operations in Jerusalem, and Hana Nassir, Chair of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, signed an agreement for the EU to contribute €750,000 to the Commission to pave the way for future elections. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

During talks with PA President Abbas in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert announced the release of 250 Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of goodwill towards Mr. Abbas, said a senior Israeli official, adding that none of the prisoners belonged to Hamas or Islamic Jihad. (*AFP*)

18

Three Israeli tanks and two bulldozers crossed near the town of Rafah some 100 metres into the Gaza Strip, sparking clashes with Palestinian militants. Witnesses said they saw the bulldozers clearing cultivated land. An Israeli military spokesperson said a small force was on a “routine operation to uncover explosive devices near the border fence in the southern Gaza Strip.” There were no immediate reports of any injuries or deaths. Local gunmen fired two mortar shells at the force.

(*AP, BBC, DPA*)

Israel resealed border crossings with the Gaza Strip citing continued rocket fire at its towns. Aid groups had warned of looming shortages of food and fuel supplies in the Gaza Strip. (*Haaretz, Reuters*)

In a [media release](#), Switzerland demanded an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs demanded that the parties to the conflict adhere to the ceasefire agreement and comply with international humanitarian law. It was especially concerned about the humanitarian consequences for the civilian population. ([www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch))

For the past 10 days, Israel had imposed a virtual news blackout on the Gaza Strip. No foreign journalists have been able to enter to report on the escalating humanitarian crisis caused by the closure of Gaza's borders. AP Bureau Chief in Jerusalem Steve Gutkin said that the length of the current ban made it unprecedented. AP relied on two of its journalists who were able to enter Gaza days before the closure and had been stranded there. (*AP, IPS*)

Israeli naval forces seized 15 Palestinian fishermen and three members of the International Solidarity Movement at sea seven miles to the west of the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources said. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

Israeli forces detained 32 Palestinians during raids into several towns in the West Bank. Most of the arrests took place in Hebron and Nablus. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli forces demolished the house of Jamal Adhoud Abu Sneh in the Al-Isawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Mr. Abu Sneh said that he was notified that his home would be demolished because it was too close to the Hebrew University and the municipality wanted to build a road on the site. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas spokesman Ihab Al-Ghusein said Hamas was losing patience with Israel and was reconsidering the truce agreement. He said: “The Israeli violations of the truce in the Gaza Strip confirm that Israelis never wanted any truce.” He also criticized the “silence” of the Arab countries and the international community for allowing Israel to continue its blockade. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In an interview with Richard Beeston of *Times Online*, Israeli President Shimon Peres agreed that a Middle East peace agreement by the end of 2008 seemed unlikely.

He said that the obstacles were clearer than ever before. Meanwhile, Mr. Peres told the *BBC* that he felt confident about the prospects of a Middle East peace deal in 2009 following the election of Barack Obama as US President. “I feel confident that we're at the same camp. I see no contradictions,” he said. (*AFP, BBC, www.timesonline.co.uk*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad rejected proposals by Israeli Opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu for an economic solution to the Middle East conflict. He said: “... I appreciate the importance of economy very much, [but] the solution is not to be found in money or in industrial zones. I am interested not in redefining the occupation but in ending the occupation.” (*AFP*)

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner called for the Quartet to meet in Paris in 2008. He made the proposal at a breakfast with Quartet Representative Tony Blair. (*AFP*)

Jordan's King Abdullah II warned Israel's Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Barak during urgent talks in Amman that a military offensive in the Gaza Strip would destabilise the region, a Jordanian political source said. The King also urged the Israeli leaders in the meeting to “stop all unilateral action and take immediate measures to end the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza,” the Jordanian source said. (*Reuters*)

The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency unveiled 15 new ambulances for the PA Ministry of Health in Ramallah. The ceremony was held at the Central Public Health Laboratory and Turkish Deputy Consul General Ali Ghuniya was thanked by PA Minister of Health Fathi Abu Moghli. The ambulances were part of a larger Turkish project that would see the construction of new hospitals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Mr. Ghuniya reiterated the Turkish Government's pledge of US\$ 150 million, made at the Paris Donors' Conference in 2007. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Over 1,000 participants registered for the second Palestine Investment Conference, including 300 Palestinian and Arab businessmen, 50 Palestinians living in Israel, representatives of the International Monetary Fund, Gaza Strip investors and the media. The conference, which will be held in Nablus, would propose over \$700 million in projects for potential business partners. Dates for the conference have yet to be announced. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a [statement](#), UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay said: “By the function of this [Gaza Strip] blockade, 1.5 million Palestinian men, women and children have been forcibly deprived of their most basic human rights for months. This is in direct contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law. It must end now.” She also called on all sides to respect international law and the security of the Palestinian and Israeli populations. She appealed for a complete cessation of Israeli incursions and air strikes, and of rocket fire by Palestinian groups. ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org))

Four flour mills in the Gaza Strip would be shut down on 20 November because there was no more wheat with which to make flour. Shipment of wheat had been totally stopped for two weeks. Most flour mills in the area had already been shut down when fuel and power ran out, but some with back-up supplies were able to continue operating. Products coordinator in Gaza Ra'ed Fattouh said he had no word when more wheat would be shipped in. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called on the international community to increase the pressure on Israel to suspend all construction in the settlements and implied that the PA could appeal to the International Court of Justice in this regard, adopting the example of the separation wall. He praised the British decision to tighten restrictions on importing goods produced in the settlements. He also praised the fact that many European States no longer shied away from defining the settlements as “illegal” and not as merely “unhelpful.” (*Haaretz*)



Two rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed to the south of Ashkelon. No injuries or damage were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops arrested 14 Palestinians in the cities of Hebron, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Hebron. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak rebuffed calls to allow humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. Asked by *Israel Radio* about the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's appeal, the Defense Minister said, "No, there needs to be calm in order for the crossings to be opened ... Israel is sensitive and attentive to the humanitarian needs. But also, Hamas has to impose the ceasefire on smaller groups and this will help it receive more goods through the crossings. Should the other side choose to go back to the ceasefire, there will be a ceasefire. And if they choose to escalate, there will be an operation. We are not scared of an operation but neither are we eager for it." (*Reuters*)

Former Hamas Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip had its price and Israel should pay that price. "The lull is not given for free and those who are interested in the calmness should pay its price ... All forms of aggression on the Palestinian people must stop and the crossing points must be open," he said. (*Xinhua*)

A Palestinian and four international activists were taken into Israeli police custody at a protest in East Jerusalem. The five had been demonstrating against the demolition of the family home of the Al-Kurd family. The family's house was slated for demolition in order to pave the way for a 26-story apartment complex in the neighbourhood, a project that could leave up to 500 Palestinians homeless. In July, the US State Department brought forward an official complaint to the Israeli Government over the eviction of the Al-Kurd family, openly questioning the legality of a settler group seizing the land owned by the family. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that US President-elect Barack Obama had called PA President Abbas and told him that he would spare no effort to facilitate a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. (*AP*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, speaking to visiting foreign Jewish leaders, said that Israel was pushing for a two-State solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which would lead to "a situation of two States for two peoples ... We are not just talking about two independent democracies, but about two different nation-States ... Israel is a Jewish State, and the other State will serve as a complete solution for all the Arab demands, including the right of return. There will be no right of return into Israel." (*Xinhua*)

The head of the Fatah parliamentary bloc, Azzam al-Ahmad, said that PA Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat would lead the Palestinian delegation to attend an emergency meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers on Middle East peace on 26 November in Cairo. Mr. Erakat would brief the Arab Ministers about the results of the peace talks with the Israeli Government and the meetings with the representatives of the Quartet. (*Xinhua*)

Violent clashes erupted between the IDF and settlers who refused to vacate a house in Hebron. Settlers claimed they had bought the four-storey building from a Palestinian, who denied the deal had been completed. The High Court on 16 November ordered the evacuation due to forged ownership documents. Late in the day, the house had still not been evacuated and the settlers' protests grew stronger throughout the city. Some settlers began to attack Palestinian locals while others injured an IDF soldier by spraying turpentine at him as he tried to stop them from throwing stones at Palestinians. According to Dror Etkes, project coordinator of Yesh Din human rights group, "the settlers eyed this specific house because it marked a vital site in their unhidden plan to create Jewish continuity between 'Kiryat Arba' and Hebron's city centre. This continuity would enable them to annex, in practice, this entire area to 'Kiryat Arba', while gradually expelling the Palestinian population that had been living there for generations." (*AFP, AP, Haaretz, Ynewnews*)

In London, Israel's President Shimon Peres told members of the British Parliament that Israel would have difficulty dismantling West Bank settlements without causing a civil war in Israel. He said that he had responded positively to the Arab peace initiative. "However, it should be clear that agreement cannot be achieved by a simple 'take it or leave it' offer. We couldn't accept all the articles of the Arab Initiative. The truth is that it's hard to answer all demands at a time when some parties in the region reject peace. Hamas violently rejects compromise. It continues to fire rockets at Israeli civilians. We can understand land for peace but will not accept land in return for rocket fire," he said. While Mr. Peres spoke, pro-Palestinian protesters called on Britain not to maintain ties with the "apartheid State"

Israel and the "war criminal Peres." The previous day, a larger demonstration outside Oxford University's lecture hall disrupted Mr. Peres' speech on "peace and globalization." (*Haaretz*)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd [warned](#) that UNRWA was facing a "grave and imminent crisis" and that if it was to be averted, the agency must receive significant additional pledges in the first quarter of 2009. ([www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org))

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [issued](#) the Consolidated Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory for 2009. In its press release, it stated that in view of the increased need for relief assistance, the UN agencies and non-governmental organizations participating in the Consolidated Appeal Process were seeking a more focused humanitarian response for 2009. ([ochaonline.un.org](http://ochaonline.un.org))

Gisha and Israeli human rights group, issued a press release demanding that Israeli authorities end the closure of the Gaza Strip, which violated international prohibitions against collective punishment and demanding the immediate reversal of all restrictions on the transfer of fuel, cooking gas and humanitarian products into the Gaza Strip." (*AFP, AP*)

## 20

Hospital staff and witnesses stated that an explosion in the Gaza Strip had killed a member of Hamas. It was not immediately clear whether he was killed by an IDF strike or an accidental explosion. The IDF had no immediate comment. Meanwhile the IDF arrested 31 "suspected militants" south of Bethlehem. (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian militants fired a rocket into the western Negev as residents of Ashkelon demonstrated against the upsurge in cross-border attacks from Gaza. The rocket, which struck an open area, caused neither casualties nor property damage. (*Haaretz*)

The armed wing of Hamas announced that one of its fighters had been killed by Israeli tank shrapnel in the vicinity of the Nahal Oz fuel terminal east of Gaza City. (*IMEMC*)

The IDF said that it had prevented a Palestinian from stabbing a female IDF soldier at the Beit Eiba checkpoint near Nablus. Another Palestinian carrying a knife was arrested at the Hawara checkpoint near Nablus. Israeli military forces also arrested two Palestinians from the town of Tammun in the West Bank. (*Haaretz, IMEMC, Ynetnews*)

Israeli soldiers ransacked a municipal agricultural assistance office in the village of Tuqu, south of Bethlehem, and confiscated farmers' documents. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas met with Jordan's King Abdullah II in the Red Sea port of Aqaba after the King invited him for talks as part of stepped up diplomacy to avert wider bloodshed in the Gaza Strip. (*Reuters*)

The PLO began an unprecedented campaign to explain the Arab peace initiative to the Israeli public by placing full-page advertisements in Hebrew in four major Israeli newspapers. The advertisements described the Arab plan. "Fifty-seven Arab and Islamic countries will establish diplomatic ties and normal relations with Israel in return for a full peace agreement and an end to the occupation," the text read, under Palestinian and Israeli flags set side by side. (*Reuters*)

Among the issues discussed during a telephone conversation between Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was an appeal to ease the Gaza Strip blockade. Israeli Government officials said that Ms. Livni made it clear that the sanctions would not stop until Palestinian militants brought to a halt their attacks on Israeli border communities. Ms. Livni demanded that the world stop ignoring attacks on Israel by Gaza militants. Her office said in a statement that she demanded that the international community stop applying a policy of ignoring acts of terror aimed at hurting innocent people. (*AP, AFP*)

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Maguire said that the UN should suspend or revoke Israel's membership for ignoring a series of United Nations resolutions over the years. She told a news conference that it was time for the international community to take action against Israel. (*Haaretz*)

Israel reinstituted its blockade of the Gaza Strip after a brief respite to let humanitarian aid pass through. No fuel, humanitarian supplies or commercial commodities were allowed into Gaza anymore. The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, described the situation as "desperate" and "unacceptable."

He said that the closure was seen as collective punishment. UNRWA announced that starting the same day, it would have to suspend cash assistance to some 98,000 of the poorest Gazans due to the lack of New Israeli Shekel banknotes in Gaza banks. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency, Wafa, Xinhua*)

The head of the Al Shifa medical centre in the Gaza Strip stated that the main facilities at the centre had stopped functioning due to a lack of fundamental equipment and tools. He said that the main power generator was not running for lack of fuel. (*IMEMC*)

It was reported that the leaders of some of the world's largest media organizations – *AFP, AP, Reuters, The New York Times, ABC News, BBC, CNN, CTV* (Canada) and *ZDF* (Germany) – had filed a protest with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, criticizing the Government's decision to ban journalists from entering the Gaza



Strip for the last two weeks. They stated that they were "gravely concerned about the prolonged and unprecedented denial of access to the Gaza Strip for the international media," adding that they "would welcome an assurance that access to Gaza for international journalists would be restored immediately in the spirit of Israel's long-standing commitment to a free press." Mr. Olmert's spokesman, Mark Regev, said that there was "no policy to prevent the media from entering Gaza, and the minute the security situation allows for the normal functioning of the crossings, journalists, like all of the others who have been inconvenienced, will be able to return to using the crossings." (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post*)

The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem released footage showing a mob of settlers clashing with Israeli security forces in Hebron. Some settlers started to attack Palestinian residents while others injured an IDF soldier by pouring turpentine on him when he tried to stop them from throwing stones at Palestinians. Settlers also scribbled blasphemous graffiti on the walls of a Mosque, broke windows and vandalized a cemetery. (*BBC, Haaretz, Times Online*)

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Dozens of Palestinian and international peace activists marking World Children's Day suffered tear gas inhalation during demonstrations in the village of Bil'in in the West Bank. According to the demonstrators, Israeli soldiers "showered the protesters with rubber-coated metal bullets, injuring dozens." (*Ma'an News Agency*) Israeli troops attacked with rubber-coated bullets, tear gas and percussion grenades a peaceful demonstration against the continued construction of Israeli settlements and of the separation wall near the "Homesh" settlement located between Jenin and Nablus in the West Bank. Ten people were injured by rubber-coated bullets. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An *Al-Watan TV* cameraman was injured by the firing of tear gas canisters by Israeli forces during his coverage of a peaceful march in the village of Ni'lin west of Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed in an open area in the industrial zone of Ashkelon, some 17 kilometres inside Israel. Two mortar shells were fired at the Kissufim area in southern Israel. There were no injuries or damage. The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for firing the mortars. (*AP, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh stated that Hamas remained interested in its informal ceasefire with Israel. He said that Palestinian armed groups in Gaza remained committed to a truce with Israel if it reciprocated. After two weeks of barrages, Hamas had stopped firing rockets and was working to rein in the smaller groups.

(*DPA, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Israeli security forces were bracing for violence in Hebron as some 20,000 Jewish pilgrims were expected to arrive in the city for Shabbat. Officials feared that the size of the crowd and tensions over the planned evacuation of settlers from a house located near the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Tomb of the Patriarchs) could prove to be an explosive mix. Dozens of police and troops took up positions outside the house which some 100 settlers and their supporters were refusing to evacuate despite a High Court order. The IDF indicated that violence against security forces would not be allowed to continue and that they would respond with means at their disposal. (*AFP, BBC, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Israeli police removed for the third time that week a tent erected in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem to protest the demolition of a house owned by the Al-Kurd Palestinian family. At 9.30 a.m., representatives of the municipality came with an eviction order and ten minutes later a bulldozer, backed by a massive number of Israeli soldiers, arrived. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The following statement was issued by the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General continues to express his concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza. He has underscored the importance of having Israel urgently permit the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population of Gaza, and regrets that his calls have not yet been heeded. The Secretary-General has been briefed on the humanitarian situation in Gaza by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, and supports the statement just released by his office.

The Secretary-General reiterates his condemnation of rocket and other attacks by Palestinian militants against Israeli civilian targets. He calls for an end to such attacks and urges full respect by all parties for the calm that has been in effect since 19 June.

(*UN press release SG/SM/11945*)

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, [urged](#) all parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip to refrain from violence and to allow the immediate and sustained reopening of border crossings, and stated that "measures which increase the hardship and suffering of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip as a whole are unacceptable and must cease immediately." Mr. Holmes expressed particular concern that the human dignity and wellbeing of the civilians in Gaza, over half of whom were children, did not appear to be a major issue for the parties to the conflict. He called upon the parties to refrain from actions that could directly or indirectly result in the disruption of essential services to the most vulnerable and urged Israel to ensure the sustained and sufficient flow of goods in and out of Gaza and to make sure that aid organizations could reach people, whenever and wherever needed. ([www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int))

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd stated that Gaza faced a humanitarian catastrophe if Israel continued to prevent aid reaching the territory by blocking crossing points. She said that the human toll of the sealing in November of Gaza's goods crossings was the gravest since the early days of a Palestinian uprising eight years ago. Ms. AbuZayd said that "it's been closed for so much longer than ever before... and we have nothing in our warehouses. It will be a catastrophe if this persists, a disaster." (*Haaretz, Reuters*)

Three activists from the International Solidarity Movement, who were arrested off the shore of Gaza with 15 Palestinian fishermen, announced that they were going on a hunger strike. Briton Andrew Muncie, Italian Vittorio Arrigoni and American Darlene Wallach were being held in a prison near Tel Aviv awaiting trial and facing possible deportation. They announced that their protest would continue until the three impounded fishing boats were returned. Andrew Muncie was subsequently placed in solitary confinement. (*BBC, IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

22

The Israeli military said that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had fired three rockets at Israel but two had landed harmlessly in open ground and the third had fallen back into Gaza. Israeli fire had wounded two Palestinian militants near Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, who were preparing to fire rockets at southern Israel, medical officials said. (*AFP, AP*)

PA President Abbas told the Palestine Investment Conference in Nablus: "We ask [US President-elect] Obama to become immediately involved in the peace process, and to adopt the Arab [Peace] Initiative." (*AFP*)

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said after a meeting with his US counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Lima: "We confirmed that it is important to hold a meeting on the Middle East peace process at the ministerial level, to ensure a smooth continuation in the process begun in Annapolis and begin concrete preparations for the Moscow conference in spring." (*AFP*)

PA President Abbas told the Palestine Investment Conference attended by more than 200 businessmen in Nablus: "We want the private sector to play its full role in the Palestinian territories to be successful and be profitable... There can be no real sustained development under occupation despite all our best efforts." Mr. Abbas also said: "We must make clear to the whole world that the occupation, the settlements, and the roadblocks are obstacles that must go." Participants at the Conference endorsed a package of projects estimated at \$494 million, including an "economy revival fund," at a cost of \$50 million, to be funded by the private sector and donor countries. Other planned projects included a \$25 million industrial zone in Nablus and a \$300 million power station in the northern West Bank. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency*)

23

Palestinian factions had agreed to halt rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and to renew their commitment to the ceasefire with Israel in exchange for opening crossing points into the Gaza Strip, Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha said. The meeting of the factions was held after Egypt had conveyed an Israeli message to Hamas that it would call off recent restrictions if the armed Palestinian groups halted rocket attacks against Israeli border towns, he added. (*Xinhua*)

Members of the PLO Central Council elected PA President Abbas as President of the future State of Palestine. "We will wait until the beginning of next year, and if the national reconciliation talks have not started, I will issue a presidential decree calling [an] election" both for the PA Presidency and the legislature, Mr. Abbas told the PLO meeting. With regard to the Annapolis process, he said: "So far, we have not reached agreement on a single question; every issue remains up for discussion. Even if Condoleezza Rice or someone speaking in her name says, even if Tzipi Livni or someone speaking in her name says that there are agreements being prepared, it's not true... Everyone knows that Israel has not for one moment halted the settlement construction, the building of the wall or the attacks, and nor has it allowed the opening of [Palestinian] institutions in Jerusalem." By contrast, he said the Palestinians "had made efforts which had produced results and brought security and stability to towns across the West Bank." (*AP, DPA*)

Prime Minister Olmert met with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, briefing both on progress made in Israeli-

Palestinian peace talks. "The Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to try to reach understandings with the Palestinians in accordance with the Annapolis principles," Mr. Olmert's spokesman Mark Regev said. "He expressed his firm belief that this process must continue and that the incoming US Administration and next Israeli Government must continue the historic process that started in Annapolis." Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Ms. Rice had said that the peace process was "in pretty good shape" but added that the reason there had not been an agreement yet was "largely because of the political situation in Israel." Mr. Olmert was scheduled to meet Vice President Cheney ahead of his meeting with President Bush. (AP)

Jordan's King Abdullah II urged the international community to move quickly to lift the blockade Israel had imposed on the Gaza Strip and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid to the area. He told a meeting of EU Ambassadors to Jordan that Israel's continued blockade created a humanitarian catastrophe with a destructive impact on the Palestinians. (Petra, Xinhua)

Saeb Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, called on Israel to end the complete blockade on the Gaza Strip. "President Mahmoud Abbas is exerting every possible effort to reinforce the Egyptian-brokered truce which came into effect on 19 June, because this would serve the national Palestinian interests," said Mr. Erakat. (Xinhua)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak's office announced that Israel would reopen the goods crossings with the Gaza Strip should Gazan militants hold fire for 24 consecutive hours. (Xinhua, Ynetnews)

The Roman Catholic Church protested that the Israeli authorities had prevented the Vatican's Envoy to Israel and two priests from entering Gaza. The Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem called the incident "not only a violation to diplomatic relations between States, but also a violation of the right of the faithful to hold their worship with no obstacles." (AFP)

24

An activist in the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees died of the wounds he had sustained in an Israeli raid on Gaza on 15 November, medical sources said. Medical sources also said that Israeli forces shot a Palestinian civilian in the leg near the northern border of the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian police were expected to assume security duties in the Bethlehem area by 25 December, but the overall responsibility would remain Israel's, Defense Minister Ehud Barak said. "If the Palestinian forces were proven successful in Bethlehem as well, Israel would consider expanding their authority to additional cities," said Israeli defense officials. (Ynetnews)

Israel's Defense Minister Barak told the Knesset that "during the months before the truce, there were 500 incidents of Qassam rockets and mortar shells fired every month and after the lull went into effect, the number was reduced to about 10 incidents a month." (Ynetnews)

Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, a top Hamas leader in Gaza, told reporters that "[PA President] Abbas has no right to decide a new date for holding the elections and he has no right to extend his presidential term." Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoom said: "They [PLO Central Council members] were never elected by the Palestinian people, and those who were not elected have no right to elect others." (Xinhua)

Local banks in Gaza, under pressure from Israeli sanctions, were running out of cash as Palestinians lined up at branches hoping to withdraw money from frozen accounts. Economists and bank officials were warning that tens of thousands of civil servants would not be able to cash their pay checks in December. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli defence officials, after consultations, agreed that some 44 trucks with basic goods could enter through the Kerem Shalom crossings with the southern Gaza Strip. Head of the Products Coordination Committee for the Gaza Strip Ra'ed Fattouh said that 30 trucks carrying food were allowed into the Strip through the Kerem Shalom border crossing. Twenty of the trucks were sent by international organizations, including the UN, another 10 trucks containing dairy products were sent by private firms. Also entering the Strip were 230,000 litres of industrial-grade diesel fuel through the Nahal Oz terminal, destined for Gaza's power plant. At the Kami crossing, 20 truckloads of feed for animals as well as wheat for flour mills were shipped. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Humanitarian aid convoys destined for the Gaza Strip left Jordan upon the directives of King Abdullah II. (Petra)

International journalists based in Israel appealed to the Supreme Court to overturn a Government decision banning journalists from entering the Gaza Strip. The Foreign Press Association filed the court petition after a letter signed by the heads of the world's biggest news organizations and sent to Israel's Prime Minister failed to persuade the Government to lift the ban. (AP)

Hard-line Israeli settlers, reinforced by about 150 Israeli youths, barricaded themselves in a house in Hebron, vowing to resist a court order to vacate the property they insist they had bought from a Palestinian. They warned of violence if Israel attempted to force them out of the building. Right-wing activists and settler leaders announced plans to hold a mass march to the house on 25 November in an effort to block its evacuation. (Reuters)

The Israeli authorities reached an agreement with the Yesha Council of settlers to relocate the recently dismantled West Bank outpost of "Migron" to the nearby "Adam" settlement. (Haaretz)

PA President Abbas said Israel would free 250 Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture before the upcoming Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. (AP)

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977. At Headquarters, a special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was held in observance of the Day. Statements were made, inter alia, by the Chairman of the Committee, the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority (on behalf of PA President Abbas). (UN press release GA/PAL/1102)

During the General Assembly's annual debate on the question of Palestine, General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann said he believed that the failure to create a Palestinian State was the single greatest failure in the history of the United Nations. Speaking about the Israeli violations on the ground, he said that the situation in the West Bank was often overshadowed by the humanitarian crisis facing Gaza. He said, "We cannot overlook, however, checkpoints, house demolitions during the cold months, the settlers' violence and the unabated settlement expansion that was still being officially authorized," adding, "what is being done against the Palestinian people seems to me to be a version of the hideous policy of apartheid." (UN News Centre)

25

IDF bulldozers flattened farmlands in southeast Gaza Strip, witnesses and security sources said. The residents of the al-Fukhari neighbourhood, east of Khan Yunis, said nine tanks and two bulldozers had suddenly entered the area and destroyed greenhouses and potato fields. They said that the tanks had used machine guns as cover for the bulldozers, forcing farmers and other Palestinians to flee westward. (Xinhua)

The Gaza Strip's sole power plant would shut down within 30 hours if regular fuel shipments were not allowed to resume, said Mahmoud Al-Khizindar, Gaza Fuel Companies Federation deputy chief. The power plant had resumed operation the previous day for the first time in over a week after Israel eased its blockade of the Strip, allowing in food and 440,000 litres of EU-supplied industrial fuel for the power plant. Mr. Khizindar said that the amount of fuel would only last for 30 hours, adding that Gaza would continue to be in "crisis" until normal shipments were allowed to resume. (Ma'an News Agency)

PLO Executive Committee Secretary-General Yasser Abed Rabbo said that PA President Abbas was planning to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in April 2009 despite opposition from Hamas. Meanwhile, President Abbas told reporters in Ramallah: "They [Hamas] have to understand that at the end of the day there will be elections." Mr. Abed Rabbo said President Abbas' call for elections was designed to pre-empt attempts by Hamas to delegitimize Mr. Abbas and the PLO, which he heads. The call was also a "deadline" for Hamas to resume Arab-sponsored unity talks with Fatah. (Reuters)

In a statement read by PA President Abbas' Adviser for PLO Affairs, Ahmad Abdul Rahman, at the PLO's Central Council closing session, the Council called on the Security Council to lift the siege of the Gaza Strip. It also affirmed its commitment to the Egyptian Initiative for Palestinian National Dialogue to lay the groundwork for the formation of a national reconciliation Government and for preparations for presidential and legislative elections. The Central Council called on the PLO Executive Committee to approve the Palestine National Council elections system based on proportional representation. (Wafa)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Mr. Pascoe regretted that Israel and the Palestinians would likely fall short of their commitment made at Annapolis to reach an agreement by the end of the year. However, he welcomed the parties' affirmation to sustain intensive negotiations. Mr. Pascoe's briefing included the situation on the ground, UN mediation and Quartet initiatives. (Press release SC/9509)

Some 40 settlement youths rampaged through the streets of a Palestinian neighbourhood in Hebron, puncturing car tires and shattering windows in Palestinian homes. Meanwhile, Rabbi Yigal Shandrupi, head of Mordechai Yeshiva, was expected to be brought before the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court, after police arrested him on suspicion of inciting the youths to riot. Responding to the latest developments, the Chairman of the Knesset Interior Committee, Knesset member Ophir

Paz-Pines (Labour), called on Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Public Security Minister Avi Dichter to clamp down on the offenders. "This is an additional crossing of a red line by organized, dangerous thugs, and it must be responded to with the utmost seriousness and gravity ... The police must immediately initiate a thorough investigation and start a series of arrests in order to put an end to the wild west in Hebron, and to establish, without hesitation, the rule of law," Mr. Paz-Pines said. Mr. Barak, speaking during a tour of the IDF's Hebron Brigade, warned that if settlers did not voluntarily evacuate the disputed four-storey building in Hebron, known as "Beit Hashalom", they would be evacuated by force. The Minister stressed that the evacuation would be carried out by police, with IDF support. (*The Jerusalem Post, Haaretz*)

26

A 49-year-old Palestinian woman died of a heart attack when Israeli forces stormed her house in the Qalandiya refugee camp in the West Bank, arresting two of her sons. Israeli forces also arrested 12 Palestinians in the West Bank, *Israel Radio* reported. (*Xinhua*)

According to an operational briefing obtained by *Haaretz*, the Israeli army assassinated "wanted" West Bank Palestinians in spite of the High Court of Justice's guidelines. The report said that high-level military officials approved the assassinations "even when it could have been possible to arrest the targets instead."

Army officers authorized the killings in advance, "in writing, even if bystanders would be killed as well". The assassinations policy also ran contrary to what the military had been telling the High Court, "as they were subject only to minimal restrictions" prior to a court ruling that demanded otherwise. The obtained document, which was a preliminary paper entitled "Operation Two Towers," detailed a mission planned by Israeli Commander Yair Naveh. Though it said that "the mission is arrest," the document allowed the army to kill any of the three Islamic Jihad members named in the document. (*Ma'an News Agency, Haaretz*)

Libya sent a ship carrying 3,000 tons of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. (*AFP, AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

A Palestinian fuel official, Mahmoud Khazundar, said that Israel was allowing cooking gas into the Gaza Strip for the first time in weeks, but the shipment of 70 tons was only a fraction of what Gaza residents required. UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner General Filippo Grandi, who complained that it was not enough, said, "This is a hand-to-mouth situation. It is like working to serve a population of one million refugees with hands tied in the back." (*AP, AFP*)

The High Court of Israel ordered the Government to explain why it would not evacuate "Migron," one of the largest outposts in the West Bank, built on what the Government acknowledged was private Palestinian land. More than two years after the case began, the Israeli Government told the Court it wanted to leave "Migron" in place until alternate housing was built for its residents. The new homes would be built east of the nearby government-sanctioned settlement of "Adam", according to an agreement between the Defense Ministry and the Yesha Council of settlers. The houses for the "Migron" settlers would be built about a mile away from "Adam" thus constituting a new settlement, the Yesha Council said. The State maintained that the new houses would fall within "Adam's" municipal boundaries. (*AP*)

At a news conference in Jerusalem, UN agencies and NGOs made a [consolidated appeal](#) for \$462 million in aid for Palestinians. In their appeal, the agencies said that the funds were needed to respond to a humanitarian emergency caused by Israeli policies, such as the settlements, the wall and the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The appeal listed 159 projects covering a range of sectors, including protection, food, cash for work and cash assistance, health, education, water, sanitation, agriculture, coordination and support services. The UN said that high levels of poverty and unemployment had led to an exhaustion of coping mechanisms and to an increasing dependency on humanitarian assistance. The situation was compounded by high global food prices, severe weather and drought conditions, the deepening of internal Palestinian division, and a de-development process occurring in the Gaza Strip. UN Deputy Special Coordinator Maxwell Gaylard said that while "humanitarian assistance could cushion the deteriorating humanitarian situation, it cannot stop its decline ... There is a massive assault on the human rights of the people living in Gaza." (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency*)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said his country would transfer €1 million (\$1.3 million) to UNRWA. "The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated in the past few weeks. ... The inhabitants must have access to basic commodities," Mr. Steinmeier said in a statement. He added that Israel had "the right to defend itself against Palestinian attacks" but stressed that any act of self-defence must be "proportionate." Mr. Steinmeier also said that Germany would increase its annual donation to the Agency next year to €8 million, compared to €7 million donated in 2008. (*AFP*)

The IDF dismissed a report issued by the Yesh Din human rights group that said that from the beginning of the second intifada, more than 1,200 investigations into suspect activities by Israeli soldiers had been conducted, but only 78, or 6 per cent, of the investigations had resulted in charges being filed. Yesh Din said that the report was based on information provided by the Israeli military. The military said the group failed to provide an advance copy of the report for study and that it had enlarged its military prosecution staff and worked tirelessly to maintain ethical standards. Of the 78 indictments, 135 soldiers were charged with crimes and 113 of those soldiers were convicted. Many of the cases, including the incident where a soldier shot a Palestinian with rubber bullets at close range and was publicly criticized by the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, resulted in minor convictions. Only four soldiers at the time of the report's publication had been convicted of manslaughter. (*AP, The Jerusalem Post*)

The General Assembly adopted four resolutions under agenda item 16 "Question of Palestine." The draft entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" ([A/63/L.32](#)) was adopted [as resolution 63/26] with 107 votes in favour, 8 against and 57 abstentions; the draft entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat" ([A/63/L.33](#)) was adopted [as resolution 63/27] with 106 votes in favour, 8 against and 57 abstentions; the draft entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" ([A/63/L.34](#)) was adopted [as resolution 63/28] with 162 votes in favour, 8 against and 4 abstentions; and the draft entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" ([A/63/L.35](#)) was adopted [as resolution 63/29] with 164 votes in favour, 7 against and 3 abstentions. Under agenda item 15, "The situation in the Middle East," the draft resolution entitled "Jerusalem" ([A/63/L.36](#)) was adopted [as resolution 63/30] with 163 votes in favour, 6 against and 6 abstentions. (*UN press release GA/10791*)

27

Israeli troops arrested 11 Palestinians from Nablus, 2 from Tulkarm and 10 from Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Qassam rockets fired from the northern Gaza Strip landed in the southern Israeli town of Sderot. No damage or injuries were reported. Another rocket landed in a kibbutz, damaging a house but causing no injuries. (*Ynetnews*)

Meeting at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo, Arab foreign ministers told Palestinian groups they should resume without delay an internal dialogue meant to bring the West Bank and the Gaza Strip back under a single Palestinian authority. They also called for an immediate end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza and promised to send food, medicines and medical supplies to Gaza immediately. The ministers said in a resolution that they recognized Mr. Abbas as president and allowed legitimacy to the Palestinian Legislative Council. The ministers also said that presidential and parliamentary elections should take place in all Palestinian territory simultaneously and they asked Mr. Abbas to remain president until the elections. (*Reuters*)

Israel again prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip in response to a rocket attack by Palestinian militants. The rocket hit an empty field in southern Israel and caused no casualties or damage, police said. Following the rocket attack, Defense Minister Ehud Barak reversed the decision to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid, his office said. (*AFP*)

28

Palestinian gunmen clashed with Israeli troops along the Gaza-Israel border. The Israeli military said troops had identified a group of gunmen in southern Gaza trying to place an explosive device along the border fence. The gunmen opened fire as the military patrol approached, and soldiers shot back, hitting one militant, the military said. In the course of the exchange, a number of mortar rounds were fired at the soldiers, but no injuries or damage was sustained, the military added. (*AP*)

Six Israeli soldiers were wounded, two seriously, when mortar shells fired from the Gaza Strip hit a military base in the western Negev region. The Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for the attack. (*Haaretz*)

A delegation of the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories visited the Jenin district police headquarters as part of a three-year EU programme aimed at providing enhanced support to the Palestinian Authority in establishing sustainable and effective policing arrangements. (*Ma'an News Agency, [www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu)*)

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel expressed "his increasing concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza."

Mr. Michel said, "I am extremely concerned by the deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza caused by the continued closure of the Gaza crossings. ... I have repeatedly condemned rocket attacks targeting Israeli civilians and I reiterate this condemnation today. However, the continued closure of Gaza crossings is a form of collective punishment against Palestinian civilians, which is a violation of international humanitarian law." ([www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu](http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu))  
The Syrian *Al-Baath* newspaper said Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan planned to send humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. The two leaders agreed to "work towards sending humanitarian aid urgently to the Palestinian people in Gaza and affirmed the need for combined international efforts to break the blockade," the paper said. (AFP)

29

Israeli troops arrested six Palestinians in the Nablus area. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

A rocket launched from the Gaza Strip landed south of the Israeli city of Ashkelon. There were no injuries. Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli settlers rampaged through Hebron slashing the tires and smashing the windscreens of some 30 Palestinian vehicles, Palestinian police said. The violence occurred amid a standoff between the settlers and the Israeli army over a four-storey house where settlers and their supporters were defying a High Court eviction order. "At least three Palestinians were hurt by stones being thrown and were taken to hospital. ... The settlers also shot at the Palestinians but did not wound anyone," a witness said. (AFP)

30

An undercover Israeli military force arrested a 21-year-old Al-Aqsa Brigades activist east of Tulkarm. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Qassam rockets launched from the Gaza Strip landed in the southern Israeli town of Sderot. There were no injuries. (*Ynetnews*)

Gaza's sole power plant was shut down for the second time in less than a week after Israel again halted fuel supplies to the territory, a Palestinian official said. (AFP)

Israel approved the release of 250 Palestinian prisoners. The prisoners, a fraction of the 11,000 Palestinians held, would be released in the West Bank before the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, officials said of the decision. "This is a confidence-building measure," said Mr. Olmert's spokesman Mark Regev, adding that those to be released were from the ranks of Fatah and other non-Islamist groups. (AFP, Reuters)

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