

Division for Palestinian Rights
***Chronological Review of Events Relating to the
 Question of Palestine***
 Monthly media monitoring review
 July 2006

Monthly Highlights

- Israel continues assault on the Gaza Strip. ([1 July](#))
- Israel aircrafts sets Prime Minister Haniyeh's office ablaze. ([2 July](#))
- UN Human Rights Council adopts resolution demanding Israel end military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ([6 July](#))
- Israel detains 27 Hamas-affiliated PA ministers ([6 July](#))
- The United States vetoes Security Council draft resolution calling for release of abducted Israeli soldier and for a halt to "disproportionate use of force" by Israel. ([13 July](#))
- St. Petersburg G8 Summit adopts document on the Middle East ([16 July](#))

1

Israeli troops and Hamas gunmen clashed in the southern Gaza Strip. An Israeli army spokesperson said, "An anti-tank missile was fired at a bulldozer. The force responded with gunfire," adding that there were no reports of casualties. Soldiers, backed by tanks, had earlier skirmished with gunmen in the area, wounding one Palestinian, witnesses said. (AFP, Reuters)

Israeli aircraft demolished seven main roads in the southern Gaza Strip to thwart attempts by Palestinian militants to move the captured soldier. (The Jerusalem Post)

Palestinian militants holding Gilad Shalit, the captured Israeli soldier, issued a new set of demands, calling for the release of 1,000 Palestinian, Arab and Muslim prisoners and a halt to Israel's military offensive in Gaza. The demand was issued in a statement by the three Palestinian groups that had claimed responsibility for the abduction of the soldier – the militant wing of Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam. The statement also repeated a demand made earlier for the release of all Palestinian women and minors held in Israeli prisons, an estimated 500 people, in exchange for information about the soldier. Palestinian Authority (PA) Deputy Minister for Prisoners' Affairs Ziad Abu Aen said that mediators had told him that the soldier had been injured in the attack but was in stable condition. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev responded by saying, "Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has reiterated that there will be no deals, that either Shalit will be released or we will act to bring about his release. (AFP, AP, Reuters)

An Egyptian security official said that more than 4,000 Palestinians were stranded in two Egyptian towns by the Gaza border, unable to return home amid an Israeli assault on the coastal strip. Many of them were Palestinians working in Persian Gulf countries on their way home through Egypt to Gaza for summer vacation, he said. (AP)

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar condemned the Israeli military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the detention of Palestinian officials, describing what was happening in the Territory as an unnecessary provocation. He made the comments during a ceremony at the Malaysian Embassy in Amman to deliver to an official of Jenin US\$ 286,000 in financial aid for the construction of two elementary schools in the city. Jenin's mayor, Hatem Jarrar, had been due to receive the aid in person but he was among the 64 officials detained by Israel on 29 June. (AFP, AP, Petra)

2

Israeli aircraft bombed the office of PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, setting the building ablaze. It was empty because of the late hour, according to witnesses. One bystander was slightly injured, hospital officials said. The Israeli army confirmed the attack, explaining that it had been a clear message conveyed to the Prime Minister. "Hamas is a terror organization which regularly plans and carries out attacks against Israel, including attacks carried out in recent weeks. The IDF holds the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas Government responsible for the recent attack and the fate of the abducted soldier," the army said in a statement. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Ynetnews, www.idf.il)

A 34-year-old Hamas militant, Shaaban Manoun, was killed and another was wounded in an Israeli air strike on a building in the northern Gaza Strip

housing a new security service created by Hamas. Israeli aircraft had earlier hit a school in Gaza City run by Hamas, causing no casualties. (AFP, AP, BBC, Reuters)

Israeli troops shot dead three armed Palestinians near the long-closed Gaza airport in the southern Gaza Strip. Two of them were carrying explosive belts, and Israel said that they had been planning a suicide attack. (AP, Reuters, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

The Israeli army arrested a "wanted" Fatah operative in the village of Beit Awwa, south-west of Hebron. (www.idf.il)

Israeli troops raided a Palestinian hospital in Nablus, searching for a "wanted" man wounded in an earlier operation, Palestinian witnesses and doctors said. The soldiers shot stun grenades and tear gas as they stormed the hospital, and once inside, put the doctors and nurses on one floor. One grenade hit a Palestinian youth in the head, seriously wounding him, doctors said. (AP)

The Israeli army fired more than 500 artillery shells at rocket launching sites in the northern Gaza Strip over the weekend. (The Jerusalem Post)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said at the start of a weekly cabinet meeting: "My Government has instructed the IDF and the security establishment to do everything in order to bring Gilad [the captured soldier] back home to his family safe and sound, and when I say everything, I mean everything, whatever is possible, whatever is necessary." (www.pmo.gov.il)

Israel reopened the Al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, six hours a day for the next four days. The Israeli Defence Ministry said that 150 trucks would be allowed to pass through each day to allow food and medical supplies to be sent in from Israel. Israel also opened the Nahal Oz fuel terminal. (AP, The Jerusalem Post)

PA Cabinet Secretary Mohammed Awad announced that the duties and powers of the eight ministers arrested on 29 June by Israel had been transferred to ministers in the Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Speaking to reporters in Banjul, Gambia, where he was attending a summit of the African Union, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "I remain very concerned about the need to preserve Palestinian institutions and infrastructure. They will be the basis for an eventual two-State solution and are thus in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians. It would, therefore, seem inadvisable to carry out actions that would have the opposite effect." (UN News Centre)

3

Israel massed tanks and troops across from the northern Gaza Strip, and pounded the area with artillery. At daybreak, a small force of Israeli tanks entered northern Gaza, but the military said that it was a "limited" mission to find explosives and tunnels near the border fence. (AP, Reuters)

Israeli forces killed two members of Hamas' military wing in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. Troops opened fire at two gunmen, hitting one of them. The air force later attacked their convoy from the air, killing a second militant. (AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters, Ynetnews)

Israeli artillery hit a house on the outskirts of Beit Hanoun, slightly injuring one person, Palestinians said. Around the same time, Israeli aircraft hit several targets, including a building in Gaza City housing an office of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. A missile struck the second floor of the two-storey building, setting it on fire. No one was in the office at the time, and a family living on the first floor escaped harm. Other targets were empty fields and a building in northern Gaza, Palestinians said. Israeli navy gunships aimed at a beachfront Hamas camp but missed, according to Palestinian security officials. (AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

The three Palestinian militant groups holding the Israeli soldier said in a statement faxed to news agencies, "We give the Zionist enemy until 6:00 tomorrow morning [0300 GMT], Tuesday, 4 July.... If the enemy does not respond to our humanitarian demands mentioned in previous leaflets on the conditions for dealing with the case of the missing soldier, we will consider the soldier's case to be closed.... And then the enemy must bear all the consequences of the future results." But the deadline passed without event, and Abu Muthana, a spokesman for the Army of Islam, one of the three groups that kidnapped Cpl. Shalit, said that the militants "decided to freeze all contacts and close the case on this soldier", adding, "We will not give any information that will give the occupation good news or reassurance". Mr. Abu Muthana said, "We will not kill the soldier, if he is still alive."

(AP, Reuters)

Israeli forces arrested overnight 11 "wanted" Palestinians. (www.idf.il)

A Qassam rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed in Israel's western Negev, setting a local orchard on fire. (Ha'aretz)

The Swiss Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Israel's destruction the previous week of the main Gaza electricity power station and its attack on the office of the PA Prime Minister had been unjustified. It accused Israel of violating international law in its Gaza offensive by inflicting heavy destruction and endangering civilians in acts of collective punishment banned under the Geneva Conventions. It also urged Israel to free detained Hamas officials, including Cabinet Ministers and lawmakers. Switzerland also called for the "rapid release" of the captive Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit. But it said that Israel had an obligation "to respect international humanitarian law in the measures it undertakes to liberate the captured soldier." Israel's Ambassador to Bern said that Switzerland's criticism was unfair, noting that Israel was supplying people in the Gaza Strip with electricity, water, fresh food and medicine even though Hamas, the governing party, had sworn to the Jewish State's destruction. (AP)

4

Palestinian militants hit the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon with a rocket from Gaza for the first time, causing no casualties but drawing a pledge of harsh retaliation from Israel. Prime Minister Olmert called the attack a "major escalation". The rocket flew 12 km (7 miles) through the air and exploded in the courtyard of a school in Ashkelon, north of Gaza. The school was empty at the time and no one was hurt. Later, an Israeli aircraft fired missiles at a Hamas camp in southern Gaza, Palestinians and the Israeli military said. No casualties were reported. (AP)

Israeli staged an operation in northern Gaza with a mission of looking for tunnels, explosives, weapons warehouses and other facility used by militants, according to the area army commander. So far the troops stayed outside Palestinian towns, but Prime Minister Olmert indicated that might change in response to the rocket attack on Ashkelon. Mr. Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz decided to gradually step up the operation in northern Gaza, defence officials said. (AP)

Israeli planes attacked the Palestinian interior ministry headquarters in the Gaza Strip, causing heavy damage and injuring four people, Palestinian sources said. (AFP)

Israel's Prime Minister Olmert rejected an ultimatum from the Palestinian captors of Cpl. Gilad Shalit that ordered Israel to begin releasing prisoners or "bear all the consequences". Mr Olmert said in a statement that he held the Palestinian Authority fully responsible for the welfare of Mr. Shalit.

"Israel will not give in to extortion by the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas Government, which are led by murderous terrorist organization.... We will not conduct any negotiations on the release of prisoners," he said. (The Guardian)

Six hours after the deadline for a deal involving an exchange or prisoners had expired, Hamas spokesman Salah Bardawil stated: "We want to keep the soldier [Gilad Shalit] alive and well." Dr. Bardawil said, "Israel must deal with the reality that there is resistance to its continuing occupation of Palestinian land. On one hand, we don't want to kill any [Israeli] soldier or capture any soldier. On the other hand, we embody the Islamic

resistance to occupation". (*The Irish Times*)

British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians "ghastly," and said that it could not be resolved without international intervention. The West would pay "a very heavy price" with the Muslim world if it failed to find a solution to the conflict, he told senior British Parliament members. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Malaysian Parliament's Dewan Rakyat (Lower house) unanimously approved an emergency motion, calling on the United Nations to convene an emergency meeting to discuss the Palestine issue. Malaysia, which holds the chair of the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, had asked its Permanent Representative to the United Nations to press the UN for the session, said Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Ministry Ahmad Shabery. (*Xinhua*)

5

Mahmoud Shahin, 37, from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades was shot dead by Israeli troops in Ein al-Sultan refugee camp near Jericho, medical and security sources said. Mr. Shahin, whose family lived in Jordan, had been living in the West Bank for the last couple of years having arrived with an Israeli permit. An Israeli army spokeswoman confirmed that troops had shot a "wanted" Palestinian who had escaped from a house surrounded by IDF forces on an arrest mission. (*AFP, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*)

The IDF arrested a Palestinian on suspicion of preparing for a suicide attack, an army spokeswoman said. Ahmed Salim, 17, was detained near the Barkan industrial zone close to the settlement of "Ariel" in the northern West Bank. The suspect, a member of the Islamic Jihad, was "carrying an explosive charge linked to a mobile phone device". In the southern West Bank town of Bethlehem, the Israeli army also arrested two female members of the Fatah Party. (*AFP*)

At least nine Palestinians, including a woman, were arrested by the IDF in the West Bank., security sources said. The IDF raided the house of Khalil Daqah in Beit Sahour and arrested his daughter, Niveen, 25, who worked at the Ministry of Social Affairs. In Nablus, the IDF arrested three Palestinians, while in Qalqiliya, five. The IDF blocked the Nablus-Qalqiliya road and erected a military checkpoint, preventing movement. (*Wafa*)

A group of settlers from the "Sussiya" settlement set fire to Palestinians' tents and destroyed fruit trees in north and south Hebron, local sources said.

Armed settlers from "Beit Ein", west of "Ghoush Etsion" destroyed a large area of arable land and over 70 dunums of fruit trees in Beit Amer town in the West Bank. (*Wafa*)

Two longer-range Qassam rockets, fired from the Gaza Strip, landed in the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Two more Qassam rockets fell near the Israeli communities of Nahal Oz and Zikim. (*BBC, DPA*)

Two Palestinian militants, members of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, were killed when a makeshift bomb they were handling blew up inside a house in the Zeitun neighbourhood in Gaza City, security and medical sources said. (*AFP*)

A large Israeli army force raided the residence of PA Speaker of Parliament Aziz Dweik and other lawmakers in Ramallah but failed to make any arrests, according to eyewitnesses. They said that army jeeps had surrounded the houses of Mr. Dweik and Mahmoud Ramahi, Secretary of the Palestinian Legislative Council, along with another lawmaker from Ramallah. However, they were not in their homes at that time, forcing the army to leave empty-handed. (*DPA*)

The Security Cabinet, convened by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, approved an expansion of the ongoing military operation in the Gaza Strip. A statement issued after the meeting of the Cabinet stated that the operation's main goals remained to find Gilad Shalit, the kidnapped soldier, and to prevent rocket fire on Israeli towns and cities. The Cabinet authorized the military to enlarge a security zone in northern Gaza in order to prevent Palestinian rocket attacks. It decided to step up air raids against Hamas and its Government, as well as targeted killing operations against militants who fired rockets or ordered such attacks. "The Cabinet instructed the defence establishment to prepare for gradual and lengthy military activity," said the statement. (*AFP, Ha'aretz*)

PA President Abbas' spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that the decision of the Israeli Security Cabinet to bring the Israeli army to populated areas in the Gaza Strip was a dangerous and ascending escalation to reoccupy the Gaza Strip. He said that the escalation would not serve the efforts and atmosphere aimed at finding acceptable solutions. Mr. Abu Rudeineh called on the United States Administration to pressure the Israeli Government to stop the aggression and escalation against the Palestinian people. He also called on the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and to avoid further destruction and killing. (*Wafa*)

An Israeli military court extended the detention of PA Religious Affairs Minister Nayef Rajoub and the four Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members arrested in the West Bank last week. (*DPA*)

The Jerusalem-based Palestinian daily, *Al-Quds*, quoted senior Palestinian officials as saying that PA President Abbas might postpone the referendum on the National Reconciliation Document scheduled for 26 July and announce another date. (*Xinhua*)

Palestinians in the West Bank began collecting candles to help light up the Gaza Strip after an Israeli air strike destroyed the power supply for hundreds of thousands of residents. The campaign was to show support for the 1.4 million people in Gaza and to collect at least one million candles to be shipped to the territory by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (*Reuters*)

The following statement was issued by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

"The Secretary-General once again condemns the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel, such as the one which struck a school in the town of Ashkelon yesterday. He also calls again on the Government of Israel to refrain from actions that amount to collective punishment of Palestinian civilians, and to ensure delivery of fuel, commodities and other essentials into Gaza.

"The Secretary-General again reminds the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority of their obligations under international humanitarian law, regarding protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Secretary-General repeats his call for the immediate release of Corporal Gilad Shalit. The situation is dangerous and could be explosive. The Secretary-General urges all concerned to step back from the brink."

(*UN News Centre, UN press release SG/SM/10552-PAL/2055*)

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Alvaro de Soto, warned that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, with a population of 1.4 million, had become "dangerous" after Israel knocked out a power station the previous week. He warned of the risk of water-borne diseases without proper water distribution, sanitation and sewage system. (*AFP*)

In Strasbourg, European Union (EU) officials said that prospects for the peace process in the Middle East looked "slim" in light of the escalating violence, but pledged to continue with efforts to find a solution to the conflict. Finnish Foreign Trade and Development Minister Paula Lehtomaki, whose country had taken over the six-month EU presidency, told the EU Parliament, "In the prevailing circumstances, the prospects for the peace process are slim but the idea of a two-State approach must be kept alive. Arms are not the answer". (*Ha'aretz*)

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner called on Israel to ease the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories, saying both Israelis and Palestinians must "step back from the brink." She told the European Parliament that the resurgence of violence was complicating plans to launch a special aid fund for Palestinians, which would bypass the Hamas-led Government. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner said that she was particularly worried about the suffering being imposed on the Palestinian people. "Israel has to understand its responsibilities for the well-being of the Palestinian population. An immediate step has to be the restoration of electricity to the Palestinian territories," she said. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner said that plans for a special international "mechanism" to provide immediate relief to the Palestinian people were on track but she admitted

that events in Gaza and the West Bank have "greatly complicated this effort." She said, "Now, more than ever, we need to press ahead with the mechanism to help meet the basic needs of ordinary Palestinians", adding that a number of donors had indicated their willingness to make funds available to the fund. However, she warned that donors would not be able to replace the "responsibilities of the Palestinian Government, which must take real steps to ... end the violence that threatens the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike." (DPA)

Egypt's efforts to defuse the Palestinian-Israeli crisis had come to a halt because of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaa's refusal to press for the unconditional release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier, Egyptian and Palestinian officials said. Israel had accused Mr. Mashaa of being the mastermind behind the capture of the Israeli soldier, which he had denied. Mr. Mashaa had repeatedly turned down an invitation by Egypt to come to Cairo for thorough discussions of the standoff. The Egyptian side believed time was short and Hamas should release the soldier and negotiate later to avoid a severe Israeli retaliation, but Mr. Mashaa had pressed for Israel to first give in to at least some Hamas demands, the Egyptian official said. Mohammed Beseiony, Egypt's former Ambassador to Israel, said that the Egyptian-Hamas contacts on the soldier had come to a halt, adding, "We are doing our best to resolve this conflict, because without a peaceful resolution, the whole region will be in a catastrophe". On 3 July, Mr. Mashaa met in Damascus with Ahmet Davudoglu, adviser to Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. A Palestinian official in Damascus said Mr. Mashaa told Mr. Davudoglu that Hamas was ready to be flexible. Turkish papers said Mr. Davudoglu also met in Damascus with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. Mr. Erdogan had also spoken by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, PA President Abbas and Prime Minister Haniyeh. (AP)

Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül and Ahmet Davudoglu, adviser to Prime Minister Erdogan arrived in Washington for talks on the latest Palestinian-Israeli crisis with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. A media note by the Deputy Spokesman of the US Department of State included the following: "Turkey and the United States pledge themselves to work together on all issues of common concern, including promoting peace and stability in the broader Middle East through democracy; supporting international efforts towards a permanent settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-State solution". (AP, <http://www.state.gov/>)

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking by telephone with his Israeli counterpart, Tsipi Livni, called the IDF soldier's release a "priority task" and said that Russia was making efforts to win his freedom. At the same time, Mr. Lavrov stressed that "Israel must act with the highest degree of restraint and circumspection, not placing the lives and security of the civilian Palestinian population in danger and not resorting to extrajudicial reprisal." (www.mid.ru)

In Kuala Lumpur, PA Ambassador to Malaysia Abdelaziz Abu Ghosh called for an international peace conference to be held immediately to discuss the Palestine issue and stop Israel's continued aggression in the Gaza Strip. He said Palestinians were in dire need of international protection. He said that such an international conference was necessary to realize the two-State solution as envisaged in the [Road Map](#) towards peace in the Middle East. Mr. Abu Ghosh said Israel was bombarding Palestinian schools, streets and buildings and damaging the electricity supply. It was destroying the core elements of infrastructure for the Palestinian State, he said. (Xinhua)

6

Palestinian militants fired three Qassam rockets into Israel causing slight damage. (AP)

Dozens of IDF tanks pushed up to 6 kms into the northern Gaza Strip and took up positions in three former settlements – "Dugit", "Elei Sinai" and "Nissanit" – in an operation codenamed "Oaks of Bashan." An IDF missile, fired at a group of Palestinian militants gathering on the outskirts of nearby Beit Lahiya, killed at least 7 people and injured at least 10 others, hospital officials said. Three more militants and an IDF soldier were also killed in fighting in the area. Two more militants, members of the Islamic Jihad, were killed in the south of the Gaza Strip in another air strike on a group of militants, who had fired at an IDF force searching for tunnels near the "Kissufim" border crossing. Two Hamas militants died when struck by missiles as they were about to launch rockets into Israel. A PA naval police officer was killed and at least 10 others were injured when a shell fired from an Israeli naval boat hit their post on a northern Gaza Strip beach. (AP, DPA, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, Wafa)

The IDF arrested eight "wanted" Palestinians in Tulkarm and five Palestinians, including two policemen, in Nablus, witnesses and PA security sources said. Israeli police arrested five senior Hamas officials in East Jerusalem. (Ha'aretz, Xinhua, Wafa)

Twenty-two Palestinians were killed and 70 others were wounded in the latest Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip. An Israeli aircraft fired a rocket at a group of Palestinian militants and civilians in Beit Lahiya, killing 11 people, including children. Six other Palestinians were killed in other areas in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. An Apache gunship and pilotless drones opened machine-gun fire at Palestinian militants. (The Palestinian Information Centre)

Nine Qassam rockets were fired at Israel, three of which landed in Sderot. There was no damage to property. Rockets also hit Kibbutz Zikim, Kibbutz Kfar Aza, near Kibbutz Niram, and in an open area between Kibbutz Or Haner and Sderot. (Ha'aretz)

IDF First Lt. Yehuda Bassel, 21, was killed during an IDF operation in the northern Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz)

Sources within Hamas said that Hamas would agree to release the abducted Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, and to stop firing Qassam rockets at Israel in exchange for the release of all female Palestinian prisoners and about 30 prisoners who have been in Israeli jails for more than 20 years. (Ha'aretz)

Israel's Border Police forces evacuated three Palestinian families who had occupied a building in the West Bank settlement of "Upper Modi'in." Israel's High Court of Justice had issued an injunction against entering the home while the question of ownership was being deliberated. (Ha'aretz)

The Al-Muntar (Karni) cargo crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel was shut down for fear of an attack shortly after reopening earlier in the day to allow the entry of 100 trucks with medical and food aid into the Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

An IDF spokeswoman said that the army would stay in the Gaza Strip until the operation's mission of ending rocket fire into Israel was completed. Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz said that Israel had no intention of reoccupying the Gaza Strip. "Israel has no intention of sinking in the swamp that is Gaza," he told *Army Radio*, but warned, "Let no one take that as a guarantee that we won't enter territories in Gaza in which we need to act... Return [IDF Cpl.] Gilad alive and stop the rocket launches, and we will return our soldiers to their bases." PA President Abbas called on the international community for a speedy intervention to stop the aggression against the Palestinian people, and to pressure the Israeli Government for an immediate stop of this destructive policy. "What is happening is actually a gradual Israeli reoccupation of the Gaza Strip," Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman of PA President Abbas told reporters, calling for more time to solve the abduction of the IDF soldier through "diplomatic and peaceful means." PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said in a written statement that the incursion "exposes an Israeli plan to reoccupy large areas of the Gaza Strip and destroy the infrastructure of the Strip". China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said his country was "worried and concerned" over the tension between Israel and the Palestinians, urging Israel to lift its blockade against the Palestinians and to cease military action immediately. She also called on the Palestinian side to release the hostage as early as possible to create favourable conditions to settle the ongoing military conflict. (AP, Xinhua, Wafa)

Twenty-seven Hamas-affiliated PA ministers and PLC members appeared before Israeli military tribunals, to be remanded further in custody after

being arrested last week in the West Bank. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised the diplomatic efforts of Turkey to defuse the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. She urged Israel and the Palestinians to show restraint in order to prevent a further deterioration of the situation and escalation. (Ynetnews, www.state.gov)

The father of abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit called on Israel to free Palestinian prisoners jailed in Israel in exchange for the release of his son. (Ynetnews)

PA officials warned that hospitals in the Gaza Strip were affected by power shortages, stockpiles of medicine were running low, and fuel that runs the emergency generators would be exhausted in six days. (Xinhua)

In a [resolution](#), adopted by a vote of 29 in favour, 11 against and 5 abstentions, the UN Human Rights Council demanded that Israel end its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; expressed grave concern at the detrimental impact of the current Israeli military operation on the already deteriorating humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people; urged Israel to immediately release the arrested PA ministers and members of the PLC; and decided to dispatch an urgent fact-finding mission headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the OPT. (www.ohchr.org)

7

A Fatah militant was killed when IDF troops opened fire on a house in the Askar refugee camp near Nablus, where he was staying, the IDF said. According to Defence officials, the militant, 22-year-old Damr Kandil, was planning to infiltrate the settlement of "Yitzhar" and open fire on children in a playground. He also intended to abduct a Yitzhar resident, the officials said. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli aircraft and tanks killed five Palestinians in sporadic clashes with militants across northern Gaza. (Reuters)

Hamas warned that violence in which over 20 Palestinians and 1 Israeli soldier were killed the previous day had hurt efforts to free the captured corporal and said Israel would "pay the price for every drop of blood". (Reuters)

Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter said that Israel might release Palestinian prisoners as part of an Egyptian proposal to win freedom for abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. Mr. Dichter said that once Mr. Shalit had been released and militants had stopped rocket attacks from Gaza, "then, in a goodwill gesture, Israel, as it has in the past, knows how to free prisoners." Mr. Dichter's comments were relayed by his spokesman, Ofer Lefler. (Ha'aretz)

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) published [report](#) entitled "Failing the Palestinian State: The human rights impact of the economic strangulation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory". According to the report, the Europeans should re-evaluate the political costs of participation in the Quartet. They are caught between their own neutrality and respect for consensus with the US. For similar reasons, as well as for the bad press it has among the Palestinians, the UN should leave the Quartet too. (<http://www.fidh.org/>)

8

IDF troops pulled out of the northern Gaza Strip, the IDF said. (AP)

A Palestinian woman, her 20-year-old son and six-year-old daughter, were killed by IDF tank fire in Gaza City, PA security sources said. IDF officials, citing intelligence, said that a Palestinian anti-tank missile had inadvertently hit the house. (AP)

PA Prime Minister Haniyeh urged Israel to halt its offensive, release Palestinian prisoners and resume talks about the captured soldier through international mediators. "We want to activate this initiative to bring the region out of this whirlpool of blood," Mr. Haniyeh said while touring Beit Lahiya. "We do not hold negotiations with terrorists. They must first return the kidnapped soldier unharmed and cease their fire," an official in Prime Minister Olmert's office told AFP. (AFP, AP)

Following is a statement by Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the situation in the Gaza Strip:

As I have repeatedly stated, I am extremely concerned about the dangerous situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. I am appealing for urgent action to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation of the civilian population. The Israeli air strikes on Gaza's only power plant have had a far-reaching impact on Gaza's hospitals, flour mills, and water and sanitation systems. The strict controls imposed during the past weeks on the passage of basic products into Gaza, including fuel, have aggravated the difficulties of the population. A statement issued earlier today by United Nations humanitarian agencies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory provides more details on the situation. To address shortages of basic foodstuffs, and to maintain essential health and sanitation services, I call on the Government of Israel to restore and maintain the continuous and uninterrupted supply of fuel to Gaza, and to act expeditiously to replace the destroyed equipment at the Gaza power plant. The passage of foodstuffs and other essential supplies through the Karni commercial crossing should be ensured, and restrictions on movement and access for United Nations agencies should be lifted forthwith. Such steps should be without prejudice to the need to implement in full the Access and Movement Agreement of 15 November 2005. I reiterate my appeal to all concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

(UN press release SG/SM/10557-PAL/2057)

UN humanitarian agencies working in the OPT are alarmed at developments following Israel's incursion into the Gaza Strip, where innocent civilians including children have been killed in actions that have brought increased misery to hundreds of thousands of people and will wreak far-reaching harm on Palestinian society, a [joint statement](#) issued by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said (www.unrwa.org)

Britain's Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said she was "deeply concerned" after hearing of an Israeli air strike in Gaza City that had killed three Palestinian family members, including a child. "Such tragedies underline the importance of restraint on all sides," Ms. Beckett said in a statement. (AFP)

The consultative committee of the Arab Maghreb Union issued a statement condemning Israel's incursions into the Gaza Strip and its "inhumane actions" against Palestinians. (Xinhua)

9

An Israeli air strike wounded three Palestinian militants near the Al-Muntar (Karni) commercial crossing, PA security sources said. (Reuters)

An IDF air strike targeted a car carrying Hamas militants near Gaza City, wounding five people, including an eight-year-old girl, PA health officials said. Israeli aircraft also attacked a Fatah building in Khan Yunis and a bridge in the northern Gaza Strip. An Israeli helicopter fired a missile at an empty building used by militants to store home-made weapons in Gaza City, causing severe damage but no injuries, PA security sources said.

One Palestinian bystander was killed and at least four others were wounded in an IDF air raid on a car carrying Hamas militants in Rafah. (AFP)

The Popular Resistance Committees and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for firing two rockets at Sderot. One rocket moderately wounded a town resident while the other slightly damaged a house. (AP)

Israel's Defence Minister Amir Peretz conceded during an Israeli Cabinet meeting that the operation in the Gaza Strip had so far failed to yield results, but he insisted the pressure would ultimately lead to the release of the captured IDF soldier. Prime Minister Olmert said the operation would go on, for months if necessary, participants said. (AFP)

Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri condemned the Israeli rejection of the Hamas ceasefire proposal as "part of an Israeli plan to topple the Hamas-led Government and punish the Palestinian people.... Israel's series of crimes and new method of killing Palestinian families are aimed at reinforcing the principle of unilateral solutions". (Xinhua)

The Arab League had decided to submit to the Security Council a draft resolution on the Gaza Strip offensive, the PA Foreign Ministry said in a statement. (Xinhua)

About 8,000 Palestinians marched in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon to protest Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip. (AP)

"The Presidency of the European Union expresses its grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip," said a statement from Finland. "The Presidency strongly urges Israel to facilitate and ensure transfer of assistance for humanitarian needs." (www.eu2006.fi)

Saudi Arabia contributed \$1.2 million to UNRWA. (www.unrwa.org)

Libya and Yemen jointly appealed to the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to take timely and effective measures to stop Israeli attacks in the OPT and protect the Palestinian people. (Xinhua)

10

The IDF killed a Palestinian gunman and wounded several others near the Israel-Gaza Strip fence in the northern Gaza Strip when soldiers fired a missile at a group of armed Palestinians near the Al-Muntar (Karni) Crossing. Army Radio reported. An IDF helicopter targeted a car near Beit Hanoun carrying a Qassam crew, the IDF said. Three Palestinians were killed, while according to some reports, several bystanders were wounded.

The Islamic Jihad said that two of its operatives had been killed in an IDF missile attack near Khan Yunis. An IDF spokeswoman said that an aircraft had struck a weapons factory operated by Islamic Jihad. (The Jerusalem Post)

Hamas claimed responsibility for launching a rocket at an IDF position near the Sufa crossing. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for firing two Qassam rockets at the Israeli town of Sderot. No injuries or damage were reported. (AP)

IDF troops arrested a Palestinian woman in Nablus. (Wafa)

A 15-month-old Palestinian child, who had been wounded in an Israeli air strike near Khan Yunis on 21 June, has died. (AFP)

A total of 52 Palestinians, including at least 10 civilians, have been killed in Israel's recent incursion into the Gaza Strip. One IDF soldier has also been killed by "friendly fire." (DPA, Reuters)

Tens of thousands of Syrians took to the streets of Damascus to denounce the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip. (DPA)

"I haven't changed my basic commitment to the realignment plan," Prime Minister Olmert said. "We want to separate in a friendly manner and to live alongside each other ... in a peaceful way," he said. "If the terrorist organizations impose a violent confrontation, both Israelis and Palestinians will have to bear the consequences. That can't stop the inevitable process of separation of Israelis and Palestinians." As a first step, Mr. Olmert said that he expected to begin uprooting unauthorized settlement outposts in the West Bank in the near future. The Prime Minister reiterated that a prisoner swap would be a grave mistake, and ruled out any negotiations with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal. Israel had not set a specific timetable for its military offensive in the Gaza Strip, he said. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

"If the [IDF] soldier is released, we could again consider a release of prisoners as we were doing before his abduction," Israel's Interior Minister Roni Bar-On told Channel 10 television. "The Prime Minister, when he met Abbas in Jordan, had raised a possible release of young people, women and the sick... The entire project was totally swept aside by the attack, but the soldier's return would bring this back on the agenda." (AFP)

Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal told a news conference: "There will be no release of the [IDF] soldier except through freeing our prisoners." (DPA)

The PA Foreign Ministry had asked Switzerland to convene a meeting of the signatories of the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians. (Xinhua)

"The situation is clearly extremely tense and getting worse," said a spokeswoman for EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

"Those who are holding the Israeli hostage should release him without delay... At the same time, we have urged Israel repeatedly to assume its responsibilities to avoid actions that would make the situation worse for the civilian population," she said. "We are trying to see how to help the population," she added. "Our team there ... is looking into how we can redirect our efforts to help in the current situation." (AFP)

Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül announced a donation of \$1 million to assist the Palestinians. (Xinhua)

"Israeli aggression in Gaza is a matter of deep concern for us, and Pakistan has deplored it in strongest term as we want the aggression to come to an end to reduce hardships of the Palestinian people," Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson said. (Xinhua)

The WFP is distributing 2,200 tons of wheat flour to 300,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank, WFP said. The flour is part of a \$1.4 million donation from Japan. (AFP)

PA Health Minister Bassem Naeem told reporters that doctors were seeing a new type of wounds caused by Israeli weapons' fragments, which cannot be detected by X-rays. He appealed to international human rights organizations and the Security Council to launch an investigation.

(Xinhua)

The Ambassador of Japan to Israel, Jun Yokota, handed UNICEF a check for \$3.3 million to support Palestinian children's health. (Wafa)

11

A Palestinian child died of wounds that had been sustained during an Israeli air raid on northern Gaza on 6 July, Al-Shifa Hospital sources said. (Wafa)

Israeli aircraft fired missiles at a car in northern Gaza on Tuesday, and Palestinian hospital officials said that one man was killed and another wounded. Earlier in the day, an air strike hit rocket launchers in northern Gaza, Israel Radio said. Two Palestinians were wounded in that strike, hospital officials said. (AP)

An 18-month-old Palestinian boy, Hamza Taleb, died after suffering a heat stroke at the border and a 19-year-old woman also died while waiting to return to Gaza after undergoing an abdominal surgery in Egypt. They were among hundreds of people stranded in the summer heat on the closed Egypt-Gaza border, Egyptian health and security officials said. (Reuters)

An Israeli Air Force plane hit a launch site for Qassam rockets in the northern Gaza Strip near Beit Hanoun, an IDF spokeswoman said. No one was injured in the attack. (AFP, DPA)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a military wing of Fatah, said in a message from Gaza that a cell in the West Bank town of Jenin fired a rocket at an Israeli village. The Israeli military said that it had no evidence of a rocket being fired or landing in Israel. (AP)

IDF troops arrested 16 Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Nablus, Tulkarm and Hebron, security sources said. The arrests took place in Assira al-Shamaliya town, north of Nablus, Ektaba Village and Thanaba neighbourhood of Tulkarm. The IDF also arrested Palestinians in Hebron. Israeli tanks shelled areas close to Palestinian houses in the east and the north of the Gaza Strip, causing partial damage and spreading a state of fear and panic among children. An Israeli F-16 also bombarded the main bridge in Beit Hanoun, causing serious damage and blocking movement. (Wafa)

Israel's Prime Minister Olmert and Defence Minister Peretz gave the green light to additional incursions into Gaza to free the abducted Israeli soldier and stop Palestinian rocket attacks, security officials said. The new phase would include sending troops into areas of Gaza where they have not yet operated. So far, soldiers have entered southern and northern Gaza and have approached Gaza City. The previous day, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal demanded a prisoner swap, but Mr. Olmert said that would be a "major mistake", calling Khaled Mashaal "a terrorist and not a legitimate partner for anything. He's not a partner and he won't be a partner. I will not negotiate with Hamas," Mr. Olmert said. (AP)

The Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip were part of a planned operation to undermine the Hamas Government, PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said in an opinion piece printed in *The Washington Post*. "The current Gaza invasion is only the latest effort to destroy the results of fair and free elections held early this year. It is the explosive follow-up to a five-month campaign of economic and diplomatic warfare directed by the United States and Israel," Mr. Haniyeh said, adding, "If Israel is prepared to negotiate seriously and fairly, and resolve the core 1948 issues, rather than the secondary ones from 1967, a fair and permanent peace is possible." (The Washington Post)

In remarks at the start of a weekly cabinet meeting, PA Prime Minister Haniya repeated a call he had made several days before for a ceasefire.

Israel rejected a truce, saying militants must first release an abducted soldier and halt rocket attacks. (Reuters)

Hamas political leaders in Syria held talks with a PLO delegation. Hamas deputy political leader Mousa Abu-Marzouk chaired the Hamas side at the meeting with Taysser Khaled, the PLO representative in Syria, Mahmoud Khaledi and Abdullah Horani. In a joint statement, the parties said they had discussed the "current situation in the Palestinian territories and ways of getting the Palestinians out of it, and the political efforts to do so."

The meeting included discussion of "the Palestinian unified position and ways of supporting it, along with releasing the Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the [Israeli] soldier," Mr. Abu-Marzouk said. (DPA)

Qatar circulated a revised draft UN Security Council resolution demanding the unconditional release of a captured Israeli soldier as well as Israel's immediate withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The latest version of the draft, first proposed in the Council on 6 July, added several provisions in hopes of winning broader support. In addition to demanding that Israel "immediately cease its aggression" against Palestinian civilians, pull its forces out of Gaza and release detained Palestinian officials, the new draft expressed "grave concern" about the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel and condemned "all acts of violence, terror and destruction", including the recent abduction and killing of an Israeli civilian in the West Bank. It called upon the PA to "take immediate and sustained action to bring an end to violence, including the firing of rockets on Israeli territory." It also called for emergency aid to the Palestinian people. However, US Ambassador Bolton told reporters, "We still think it is unsatisfactory." Asked if the US would exercise its veto if the measure were brought to a vote, he responded, "Our position remains the same, that we don't see at this point any utility in Council action at all." (Reuters)

In Amman, PA President Abbas held talks with King Abdullah II of Jordan. They discussed the latest developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the joint Arab efforts to resolve the crisis. (Wafa)

In an interview with the State-run newspaper *El-Messa*, Egypt's President Mubarak said, "Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, promised me to free a large number of Palestinian prisoners. But events suddenly escalated." Mr. Mubarak also urged the Palestinians to "unify their positions", saying, "Wisdom and logic should prevail. They should work for the sake of the Palestinian people. It is the Palestinian children and women who are paying the price" of the crisis. (AP)

In response to an urgent appeal from PA President Abbas, the European Commission is taking its first action through the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM). From today, the TIM is providing fuel for hospitals in Gaza. Following the destruction by the IDF of six transformers of the Gaza power plant, this would allow hospitals to continue functioning, albeit under difficult circumstances. Providing the Gaza hospitals with fuel will cost an estimated €600,000 a month. The EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner said: "The current situation is very critical, but we are determined to bring relief to the Palestinian people. This first action through the Temporary International Mechanism will make a tangible contribution to the continued provision of essential health services. My staff is working intensively to bring other elements of the TIM on stream". (http://europa.eu/press_room/index_en.htm)

Norway, Sweden, Spain and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, have called on the main donor countries to consider new measures to help the people of the Gaza Strip. "The humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories is extremely worrying," Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere said in a statement on Tuesday. Aid donors are to meet on 14 July in Geneva to discuss the humanitarian situation in Gaza two weeks after the start of an Israeli military offensive there, the Norwegian Government said. The initiative came after UN agencies in Gaza warned of a humanitarian disaster failing immediate action from the international community. (AFP)

PA President Abbas' office received US\$ 50 million from the League of Arab States, the largest amount of international aid to reach the Palestinians since Hamas won elections. (AP)

UN agencies' heads and donors held their first meeting with Israel's Foreign Minister since the start of the Gaza offensive two weeks ago. In the closed-door meeting, the agency representatives asked Israeli officials to ease restrictions on bringing in supplies saying that fuel and flour were running out despite Israeli efforts to ease bottlenecks. They also said that restrictions on fishing had made it more difficult for Gazans to feed their families. (Reuters)

Six Israeli human rights groups appealed to the High Court of Justice demanding the renewal of fuel, food and equipment supplies to the Gaza Strip, squeezed by Israel's military operation. They demanded that the Israeli-controlled crossings be opened "to allow for the steady and regular supply of fuel, food, medicine and equipment". The groups demanded the hearing in order "to prevent serious harm to the health of the civilian population." (AFP)

12

An Israeli airstrike on a building in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood killed nine civilians, all members of the same family. The house belonged to Nabil Abu Salmiyeh, a Hamas activist and lecturer at Gaza City's Islamic University. Palestinian hospital officials said Mr. Abu Salmiyeh, his wife and seven of their nine children, aged from 4 to 18, were killed, and rescue workers said four people were still missing. At least 15 people were wounded, including children, three of whom were in critical condition. After initially claiming that its leaders had escaped harm, Hamas members took over the intensive care unit of Gaza City's main hospital, where doctors said seven militants were in critical condition. The IDF said Mohammed Deif, the leader of the Hamas military wing and first on Israel's wanted list for more than a decade, was the main target. Hamas, which initially denied that Mr. Deif was wounded in the strike, said later he had been hit in the legs, but his life was not in danger. He could end up paralyzed, Palestinian security officials said on condition of anonymity. "Our reaction to this massacre will be painful and strong for the Zionists and we will make the enemy leadership sorry for their crime," the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, said in a statement. (AP, DPA, BBC, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

Two police officers were killed and another two wounded, one critically, in an Israeli tank shelling on a police station in the village of al-Qararah, east

of Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. A 26-year-old police officer, Salama al-Bashitti, was killed on the spot and another policeman died of his wounds later. Shortly before that, four Palestinians were killed and three were injured on the Salah ad-Din road south of Deir el-Balah, when one of the IDF tanks that entered the central Gaza Strip at predawn fired a shell at a car. In the same area, two members of the Islamic Jihad's armed wing were killed when their car was hit by an Israeli tank shell. Early in the morning, a member of the Popular Resistance Committees was killed near Khan Yunis as he was trying to launch a home-made rocket at Israel. (Xinhua)

IDF tanks and troops moved into southern Gaza early in the day in a new phase of a two-week offensive that Israeli leaders had ordered to expand the day before. The advance on eastern Deir el-Balah meant that nearly one year after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, its soldiers were deployed along the entire Strip, from the north to the south. The IDF said that its ground forces have made a "limited incursion" into the central Gaza Strip as part of the ongoing Operation Summer Rains. The IDF also said that it had dropped leaflets in the morning warning the Gaza Strip's Palestinian population to stay away from areas in which IDF forces were operating. (AFP, DPA, www.idf.il)

The armed wing of Hamas claimed launching two home-made rockets into Israel in retaliation for an earlier Israeli airstrike that killed nine Palestinian civilians. Israel confirmed that two rockets hit southern Ashkelon. No injuries were reported. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed launching two homemade rockets at the southern Israeli city of Sderot and one mortar at an Israeli military post near the Gaza border. (Xinhua)

IDF troops arrested 15 "wanted" Palestinians in the West Bank before dawn, according to *Israel Radio*. (Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas said, "We warn against an accelerating spiral of violence in the region caused by the Israeli military escalation. We call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities." (AFP)

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi started his trip to the Middle East. At a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, he said, "I know Israeli people feel strong resentment against the current situation. But we heartily hope that Israel will take rational action by considering the importance of the coexistence and co-prosperity in the mid- and long-run." Mr. Olmert responded by saying, "I listened to various hopes from Prime Minister Koizumi, but our stance is clear and that will involve pains". During his upcoming meeting with PA President Abbas, Mr. Koizumi was expected to announce a new aid package for the Palestinians. (AFP, Reuters)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in an interview published in *Al-Ahram*, "I had reached an honourable solution to the crisis of the captured soldier and had obtained [understood] from Israel that it frees a large number of Palestinian detainees. But Hamas was submitted to pressure and other parties, whom I will not identify, intervened in the contacts engaged by Egypt, raising new hurdles for an agreement which was imminent," Mr. Mubarak said. (AFP)

Erkki Tuomioja, Foreign Minister of Finland that holds the current EU Presidency, asked Israel to stop its armed assault on Gaza. Speaking in Brussels to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, he said that the EU was also demanding the unconditional release of the Israeli soldier and an end to firing of rockets by Palestinians on Israeli territory. "These Palestinian assaults do not, however, give Israel the authority to use force that amounts to collective punishment of the whole population of the Gaza Strip," Mr. Tuomioja underlined, adding that the EU was especially worried about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. He also called for the release of arrested Palestinian legislators and ministers. (DPA)

South Africa was not planning to break diplomatic ties with Israel and calls to do so could not be taken seriously, the Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said. "As Government we cannot do symbolic things such as the breaking of diplomatic relations and boycotts and isolation under Chapter VII of the United Nations [Charter]," he was quoted as saying by the *South African Press Association*. "We believe this would not achieve much." Mr. Pahad called on Israel to stop the assault and on the Palestinians to release the captured Israeli soldier. The day before, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other organizations called on the Government to end diplomatic relations with Israel and establish boycotts and sanctions. COSATU President Willie Madisha said on 10 July that the "apartheid Israel State" was worse than the apartheid in South Africa was. (Xinhua)

13

An Israel Air Force airplane attacked the PA Foreign Ministry in Gaza City, severely damaging the building. The building partially collapsed and the bomb caused widespread destruction in the area. Houses in the area were badly damaged by the force of the blast. At least 10 persons living nearby, including children, were wounded. Israel said the pre-dawn raid was aimed at Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, who it accused of complicity in the capture of an Israeli soldier two weeks earlier. (BBC, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas reportedly held "secret talks" with an Israeli security chief to try to end the crisis over the abducted Israeli soldier and rocket firing by militants, Palestinian security sources said. The sources said that the meeting between Mr. Abbas and Yuval Diskin, head of Shin Bet, had taken place a day earlier in Amman. (Reuters)

Hamas officials held talks with Egypt on reviving mediation with Israel over the release of the Israeli soldier held by a Palestinian militant group. Messrs. Mohammed Nazzal and Mohammed Nasr, member of the Hamas' office in Damascus, held talks with Chief of Egyptian Intelligence Omar Suleiman, according to Mr. Nazzal. (Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post)

PA Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahhar said that the only way to solve the abduction of three Israeli soldiers was the Israeli release of prisoners. Mr. Al-Zahhar urged the Israeli Government to "resort to reason" saying, "Israel has the key to solving the problem and it can easily release prisoners and everything will be over." He also warned that the ongoing Israeli offensive in Gaza would "only be counterproductive." "All sorts of the Israeli escalation of violence will bring no peace," he said. "Destroying infrastructure, arresting ministers and assassinating people will not intimidate us. This will only plant seeds of hatred, not only in the Arab and Muslim world but throughout the entire globe." Mr. Al-Zahhar also dismissed the Israeli allegations that the Hamas-led PA Government was responsible for the abduction of the Israeli soldier by Gazan gunmen. (Xinhua)

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was quoted by *Interfax* news agency as warning of a "very dramatic and tragic" outcome to the Middle East violence. "One cannot justify the continued destruction by Israel of the civilian infrastructure in Lebanon and in the Palestinian territory, involving the disproportionate use of force in which the civilian population suffers," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement that also condemned terrorism. (AFP)

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi pledged nearly US\$ 30 million in aid to PA President Abbas to help keep the basic Palestinian services functioning.

Mr. Koizumi arrived in Ramallah for talks with Mr. Abbas. Mr. Koizumi had announced a Japanese initiative to create a four-party framework between Japan, Israel, the Palestinians and Jordan to jointly develop Jordan Valley areas. At a press conference with Mr. Koizumi, Mr. Abbas said the "escalation in military activities which has reached Lebanon is a concern for us and for the international community, (given) the possibility of an outbreak of a regional war." He also said he would do whatever he could to remove the causes of the escalation. Mr. Abbas asked Mr. Koizumi and other concerned international powers for immediate intervention to halt the dangerous deterioration in the Middle East. (AFP, DPA, Reuters, WAF)A

The Arab League announced that Foreign Ministers would meet in an emergency meeting in Cairo on 15 July to discuss the Israeli military escalation in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (Xinhua)

US President Bush accused Hezbollah and Hamas of trying to derail peace efforts. "Hezbollah doesn't want there to be peace, the militant arm of Hamas doesn't want there to be peace, and those of us who do want peace will continue to work together to encourage peace." (AFP)

The United Kingdom urged Israel to keep its military action in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon “proportionate.” Prime Minister Tony Blair was scheduled to discuss the unrest with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana. The Russian Federation, France and Italy condemned Israel’s “disproportionate” use of force. (AFP)

The United Nations Security Council failed to adopt a [draft resolution](#) sponsored by Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli soldier abducted by Palestinian armed groups and for a halt to a “disproportionate use of force” by Israel, due to a veto by the United States. Ten Council members voted for the resolution and Britain, Denmark, Peru and Slovakia abstained. Calling the draft “unbalanced,” US Ambassador Bolton said it “placed demands on one side of the Middle East conflict but not the other.” If adopted, the text would have exacerbated tensions in the region while undermining the vision of a two-State solution as well as the credibility of the Security Council itself, he said, adding that the United States had worked to achieve a more balanced text, one which acknowledged that Israeli actions came in response to attacks, but no agreement had been reached. The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, Riyad Mansour, said that he was disappointed with the Council’s “continued inability to act while innocent Palestinian civilians continue to be brutally killed by the Israeli occupying forces.” (AFP, AP, UN News Service)

“The US voted against the resolution before the Security Council because it is unbalanced and inflammatory,” State Department spokeswoman Janelle Hironimus said. “Further, we believed that the resolution will aggravate tensions in the region, especially following the major escalation of attacks by Hezbollah in the past 24 hours. This resolution undermines the credibility of the UN, which must be seen by both sides as an honest broker in the Middle East conflict. We regret that our efforts were not successful in achieving a more balanced text. We also thought it was appropriate to wait until the Secretary-General dispatched a high-level team to the region.” (AFP)

The following statement, attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, was issued in Rome:

The Secretary-General has decided to dispatch a three-person team led by his Special Political Advisor, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, to the Middle East to help defuse the major crisis in the region. The other members will be senior United Nations officials Mr. Alvaro de Soto and Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen.

The team will first visit Cairo to meet with Egyptian officials and consult with Arab League Foreign Ministers, who will be meeting there on Saturday. Mr. Nambiar and his team are also expected to travel to Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, and Syria. Other stops will be added as needed.

Mr. Nambiar will emphasize to all parties the Secretary-General’s call to exercise restraint and to do whatever possible to help contain the conflict.

He will also reiterate the Secretary-General’s message to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

([UN press release SG/SM/10566](#))

Syrian leaders held talks with Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO Political Department, on developments in the Middle East, Syria’s official news agency *SANA* reported. Mr. Kaddoumi and Syrian Vice-President Farouk Shara’a stressed that a “unified Arab stance” was necessary in the face of Israeli military operations. Mr. Kaddoumi also met with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem to discuss the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He described the Israeli offensive in Gaza as “barbaric”. (DPA)

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in a prepared statement delivered midway over the Atlantic Ocean: “Israel has the right to defend itself. I think Israel’s response under the circumstances has been measured. It’s essential that Hezbollah and Hamas release their Israeli prisoners and any countries in that area that have influence on these organizations should encourage an end to violence and recognize – and encourage the recognition of – Israel’s right to exist.” (AP)

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Jordanian King Abdullah II expressed deep concerns about the escalating Middle East crisis. “It may be exaggeration, but [the current situation] appears close to the one on the eve of the 1967 Middle East war,” King Abdullah told Mr. Koizumi at the Royal Palace in Aqaba, according to a Japanese Government official. (AFP)

The ICRC issued a [fact sheet](#) on its activities in the Gaza Strip and [press release](#), saying that it was alarmed by the deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip and urging Israel to respect the rules of international humanitarian law. It also urged those detaining IDF Cpl. Shalit to treat him humanely and allow him to contact his family. The ICRC had informed all the parties that it stood “ready to provide its services”. (AP, [www.icrc.org](#))

14

A 12-year-old Palestinian girl, whose family was killed on 9 June on a Gaza beach, arrived in the United Arab Emirates, where the Deputy Prime Minister is seeking to adopt her, *The Gulf News* reported. Huda Ghaila is undergoing psychological treatment at Sheik Zayed Military Hospital for emotional and cognitive damage. (AP)

An Israeli tank fired on a Palestinian truck in the Gaza Strip, fatally wounding a Palestinian man inside. Palestinians said the truck took a wrong turn and approached Israeli forces in central Gaza. The Israeli military said the truck drove within 30 metres of an Israeli position and ignored orders to stop. Then a tank fired a shell at the truck, hitting it. A passenger, later identified as Ra’ed al-Bayuk, was wounded and later died, while his cousin who was driving the truck escaped with injuries. Palestinian ambulances were reportedly not able to reach the car after it was hit as coordination between the Palestinians and the Israeli soldiers was needed. (AP, *Xinhua*)

The Israeli Air Force carried out at least two overnight raids and ground artillery and naval gunboats shelled the north and south of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, tanks and armoured jeeps positioned on a north-south road in the central Gaza Strip near the Deir al-Balah refugee camp and the town of Khan Yunis withdrew from the area. “I can confirm that they have withdrawn from the central Gaza Strip. They’ve completed their mission there,” an IDF spokeswoman said, adding that the only place where Israeli ground forces remained was in Dahaniya, in the south, near Gaza’s former international airport. In the morning, witnesses reported Israeli tanks moving in the southern Gaza Strip. The IDF said they were rotating forces in and out of the territory. (AFP)

An Israeli helicopter fired a missile into the north Gaza offices of several Hamas lawmakers, including Mushir al-Masri, who had been outspoken in demanding that Israel release Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Cpl. Shalit. Israeli warplanes also destroyed a bridge in central Gaza, wounding a civilian, Palestinian security sources said. It was the fourth bridge destroyed by Israel since the offensive in Gaza began two weeks earlier. (Reuters)

About 70 Palestinians blew through the wall between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, allowing some 2,000 Palestinians to return to their homes in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians had been stranded on the Egyptian side since the border was closed more than two weeks earlier, after two Israeli soldiers were killed in an attack. The hole was around 6 meters wide and about 70 metres from the Rafah border terminal. Some Palestinians walked through the breach carrying suitcases; others ran, while others hobbled through on crutches. Several people have been reported to have died from

heat exhaustion during the two-week period. (AFP, BBC)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana will travel to the Middle East on 15 July to back UN efforts to defuse the growing crisis, Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja of Finland, the current EU President, told reporters in Helsinki. Mr. Solana's spokeswoman said the previous day that he was preparing to head to the region, without being able to confirm an exact date. (AFP)

British Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters in London at a press conference with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, "The only way we are going to get the situation resolved is if we support the UN mission, get some calm in the situation, and then as soon as possible get back to the Road Map towards the two-State solution which offers the only chance of stability and peace in the future". "I totally understand the desire and the need for Israel to defend itself properly and I also understand the plight of Lebanon and the Lebanese Government, not to say the many Palestinians that are suffering as well," he added. (AFP)

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said in a radio interview, "In my opinion Israel is making a mistake and its response will probably only cause intensification of the violence". "It is one thing to defend yourself legitimately, another to launch a generalized counter-attack on Lebanon and Gaza," said Mr. Zapatero, condemning an escalation he said would "set us back decades." He called on fellow members of the EU to "demand an immediate freeze on hostilities." (AFP)

"The UN and the Security Council and the United States should explain their silence towards the Zionist regime's crimes, otherwise they would be held responsible for being part of these crimes," ISNA quoted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying in a speech in Osku in north-western Iran. "The developments in the Middle East have become a venue for testing the Western claims of democracy and human rights, but the West has badly failed the test," the President said. (DPA)

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said, "We deplore the unilateral acts conducted by Israel which have left many victims, including innocent civilians. What we have witnessed in the past few weeks are certainly disproportionate reactions using Israeli military might."

Separately, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono also called on Israel to stop its military action, telling reporters during a visit to Tsunami-hit Aceh province, "Indonesia is very concerned with the developing situation that is extremely threatening to peace and humanity in that region". (Reuters)

The US will make a new \$15.85 million contribution to OCHA, a US official said. The US told a donors' meeting in Geneva, chaired by UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jan Egeland, that it would announce the contribution later in the day in Ramallah. The announcement will be made by US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch, the official told the gathering of about 30 countries and major donor organizations, including IMF and the World Bank. The US has provided almost \$240 million in aid to Palestinians so far this year. (AP)

15

Israeli planes attacked the Beirut headquarters of Hamas in an airstrike. (AFP)

Egyptian medical and security teams were sent to the Rafah border crossing after some 2,000 Palestinians forced their way back into the Gaza Strip.

"North Sinai Governor Ahmed Abdel Hamid gave instructions to all the State's services to be prepared for emergencies." (AFP, MENA)

The Non-Aligned Movement condemned as "disproportionate" Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip and called for the revival of the Road Map.

The Non-Aligned Movement Chairman, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia, said that Israel's use of force and its detention of Palestinian officials were undoing the peace process. He also said, "We would urge the G8, several of whose members are also members of the international Quartet and the UN Security Council, to make serious efforts to resuscitate the Road Map. This still represents the best hope for progress towards a final settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict." (AFP)

Eighteen Foreign Ministers of the Arab League meeting in Cairo passed a resolution calling on the UN Security Council to intervene to stop the escalating Middle East fighting. Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said, "We all decided that the peace process has failed and that the mechanisms, proposals and committees were either deceptive or sedatives or contrary to the peace process, or handed the process over as a gift to Israeli diplomacy to do with as it wished.... So we take it back to the United Nations, and maybe the date will be in September.... The whole process should now be sent back to the Security Council for a complete overhaul." If the Security Council failed, nobody would know what might happen next," Mr. Moussa added, pronouncing the Middle East process "dead." Mr. Moussa met with UN officials in Cairo a day earlier, including UN Secretary-General's Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen. (AFP, Ha'aretz, Reuters)

16

Six Palestinians, including a civilian woman, were killed as Israeli troops returned to Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. Tanks, armoured vehicles and bulldozers rolled into the city before dawn, in the deepest incursion into the area since the capture of the Israeli soldier on 25 June. Of the six Palestinians killed, three were Hamas members and two were members of the Popular Resistance Committees. Another 20 were wounded, including a woman and an infant, by sporadic gunfire and Israeli shelling, medical sources said. Clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinians broke out when the army moved into the area. Dozens of residents from Beit Hanoun were fleeing their homes and taking shelter in UNRWA-run schools in the nearby Jabaliya refugee camp. (AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

The IDF attacked a vehicle carrying "wanted" Islamic Jihad leader Khaled Sha'alen, but Mr. Sha'alen managed to escape the car without injuries. Three other members were wounded in the strike. (Ha'aretz)

The Saraya Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for launching two home-made rockets into Sderot in Israel.

Meanwhile, the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, also announced its responsibility for firing four anti-tank rockets at Israeli bulldozers operating in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. The Popular Resistance Committees' armed wing, the Salah ad-Din Brigades, also said they launched a rocket propelled grenade at an Israeli bulldozer in Beit Hanoun. (Xinhua)

The G8 Summit held at St. Petersburg adopted a set of documents including one on the [Middle East](#). The document expressed "deepening concern about the situation in the Middle East, in particular the rising civilian casualties on all sides and the damage to infrastructure." It offered "full support for the UN Secretary-General's mission presently in the region." It said that the "immediate crisis results from efforts by extremist forces to destabilize the region and to frustrate the aspirations of the Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese people for democracy and peace." To create conditions for the cessation of violence, it urged, among others, the return of Israeli soldiers in Gaza and Lebanon unharmed; an end to Israeli military operations and the early withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza; and the release of the arrested Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians. It also urged the resumption of efforts of President Abbas to ensure that the Palestinian Government complies with the Quartet principles; immediate expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism for donors established under the direction of the Quartet; and resumption of dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli political officials. ([www.mid.ru](#))

At the G8 Summit, US President Bush and European allies urged Israel to show restraint after four days of steady bombing against Lebanon. "Our message to Israel is, look, defend yourself, but as you do so, be mindful of the consequences. So we've urged restraint," said Mr. Bush. While other G8 leaders have questioned whether Israel's response to the capture for its soldiers went too far, Mr. Bush had placed the blame squarely on Hezbollah and the nations that back it and had declined to call for a ceasefire. Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin said, "We will do everything we can to ensure peace as quickly as possible in the Palestinian territories, Israel and Lebanon." (AP)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking to reporters in St. Petersburg, rejected calls for a temporary truce in the Middle East, saying that not addressing the underlying causes of conflict just made things worse. "Of course we want violence to end, but I can tell you right now, if

violence ends on the basis of somehow, Hezbollah and Hamas continuing to hold in their hands the capabilities, anytime they wish, to start launching rockets again into Israel; if violence ends on the basis of no change in the underlying political support of resolution 1559 or for the work that President Abbas is doing.... We have achieved very, very little indeed," she said. (AFP)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that the international community had descended into "unprecedented silence" over the turmoil in the Middle East and Israeli "cruelty" against the Palestinians. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said a day earlier that Western Powers were "keeping mum" and warned that they would "pay the bill" by facing more terrorist attacks. He urged the G8 to push for a ceasefire. (AFP)

17

At least one Palestinian and one Israeli soldier were killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. An army spokesman said that in the Gaza Strip, troops fired at two groups of armed Palestinian militants who had approached them, killing one. The Israeli soldier was killed and six others wounded during an operation in Nablus, according to army sources. Witnesses said that militants had detonated explosives against the troops.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the incident. (AFP, DPA, Ha'aretz, Xinhua)

In East Jerusalem, Israeli police arrested a 25-year-old Palestinian carrying a suspicious bag that contained a bomb weighing 4 to 5 kgs. (Ha'aretz)

An Israeli F-16 jet bombed the PA Foreign Ministry in Gaza City for the second time in a week. The latest attack destroyed what was left of the building. No one was in the building at that time but rescue workers said that five people in nearby houses were injured. At least 50 apartments were severely damaged. The PA denounced attacks on civilian ministries as a "violation of human rights" and a "war crime" which would "only lead to more death and destruction." (AFP, AP, BBC, Ha'aretz)

At least 10 Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into the western Negev. Two rockets reached the Ashkelon industrial zone. Two people, including one child, were lightly injured from the shrapnel in Sderot. A number of cars and a home sustained damage. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF arrested 12 wanted Palestinians in overnight West Bank raids. (Ha'aretz)

A 20-year-old Palestinian civilian was killed and a gunman seriously wounded when an Israeli tank opened fire in Beit Hanoun. A second Palestinian, also a young man, was killed by Israeli fire in another incident in Beit Hanoun, and one more was critically wounded in crossfire between Israelis and Palestinian fighters. A third Palestinian was later killed by Israeli fire in Beit Hanoun, with the IDF saying that its soldiers "identified an armed gunman and fired at him." (AFP)

The IDF withdrew its Golani Brigade from the Beit Hanoun area of northern Gaza. The two-day operation, the latest stage of Israel's wider offensive into the Gaza Strip, was intended to create a buffer zone between militant forces and Israel. Beit Hanoun Mayor Mohammed Nazaek al-Kafarna estimated the damage to the town and its surrounding villages to US\$ 7 million, saying, "In the last two days, nine homes have been completely destroyed and 90 partially damaged. The Israelis destroyed a good part of the electricity network, the sewage and water distribution systems." They also broke into a walled compound of four UNRWA schools, empty at the time, and damaged three of them. "It's very depressing to see this done to a school in this sort of deliberate way," said Karen AbuZayd, the UNRWA Commissioner who visited the site. "I'm particularly sad because this was the year we had hoped to improve the living conditions in the camps and build additional schools and classrooms." (AFP, AP, Stratfor)

IDF troops came under fire from Palestinians in the West Bank town of Beit Furik. In a separate attack, an Israeli car was hit with a firebomb near the "Pisgat Ze'ev" settlement in East Jerusalem. No one was wounded in either attack. (Stratfor)

PLO Official Saeb Erakat said that the Rafah Terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt would be open the following day for Palestinians wishing to return to Egypt. (Ha'aretz)

Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa said 6 of the 22 members of the League favoured holding an Arab Summit on the violence between Israel and Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The six members were Algeria, Egypt, Qatar, the Sudan, Yemen and the Palestinians.

More countries could sign up for the summit in the days to come, according to a League official in order to reach the required two-thirds majority. (Reuters)

The European Commission said that it would provide US\$ 25.3 million in food aid to the most vulnerable Palestinians, and separately said it was giving money to buy fuel for power generators at water pumping and treatment plants. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

18

Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed responsibility for launching a homemade rocket into southern Israel. The statement said that the target of the attack was a place housing Israeli intelligence officers in the Ovikim neighbourhood. However, Israel said that two rockets landed in Nativ Atsra area in western Negev, one of which fell on a greenhouse and injured a foreign worker. (Xinhua)

Gunmen stormed the home of Nabil Tammous, a senior member of the Preventive Security Service, killing his bodyguard and capturing three other guards, and raising fears of renewed violence between Hamas and Fatah loyalists. Hamas said it had no part in the attack. (Reuters)

The IDF discovered that Gaza militants had fired an improved Grad type rocket at the western Negev. The Grad was found near Kibbutz Bror Hayil in the Western Negev. The rocket had an increased range and carried a larger warhead than thousands of Qassams. (Ha'aretz)

Egypt and Israel reopened the Rafah border crossing for the first time in three weeks, prompting thousands of Palestinians, some fainting in the midday heat, to flock there. Most of them were returning to the Gaza Strip, and many said that they had run out of money and been exhausted by having to wait for weeks on the Egyptian side of the border after the crossing had been closed on 25 June. About 300 Palestinians crossed into the Gaza Strip in the first hour after the gates opened. When it became evident that another 5,000 Palestinians were waiting to cross, Egypt waived the fee of 80 Egyptian pounds (US\$ 14) that it normally charged travellers. A spokeswoman for EU monitors at the border said the terminal was set to stay open until 7 p.m. (1600 GMT) for humanitarian cases only, with no immediate plans to open again the next day. The Israeli Defence Ministry said that a decision would be made that night about keeping it open indefinitely, once the European monitors at the crossing made their assessment. (AFP, AP)

The Fatah Central Committee issued a statement demanding that a peace conference be held according to the Arab Beirut Peace Initiative and the Road Map. It also called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and urged the IDF to withdraw from the two territories. Calling on Arab leaders to move quickly and face the Israeli aggression, the statement held the international community, UN Security Council and the Quartet responsible for the deterioration of the peace process. (Xinhua)

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a [statement](#) that Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov was sent to the Middle East to push for an end to violence in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to lobby in favour of a proposed UN force in southern Lebanon. "In the course of his meeting with the countries' leadership particular attention will be placed on finding a way to rapidly end the bloodshed and violence," the Ministry said. (Reuters, [www.mid.ru](#))

Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern told the Parliament's foreign affairs committee, "Israel has an absolute right to peace and security. But Israel is a strong military power. We share the belief within the EU that its military response in Gaza and in Lebanon has been harsh and disproportionate.

Israel has a legitimate right to defend its citizens, but this must not be at the expense of the lives and welfare of Lebanese and Palestinian civilians.

All military operations must be carried out in strict accordance with international law. And all parties must act on their responsibility to protect civilian lives. It has to be said that Israel is clearly failing to do so." Mr. Ahern said he condemned "the rising toll of death and destruction, the

blockade of Lebanon, and the desperate conditions under which 1.5 million Palestinians are living under effective siege in Gaza.” (AP)

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told reporters after a meeting with ambassadors from 10 Middle Eastern countries, “We are calling for a ceasefire under the auspices of the United Nations”. He said that the UN General Assembly should convene a session to discuss the conflict if the Security Council was unable to make a decision. Mr. Yudhoyono also said that his country would contribute to the peace process in the Middle East by appointing a special envoy to voice the country’s messages in various international forums, by preparing one battalion of troops to join with the proposed international peacekeeping force and by providing US\$ 1 million in humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. (AFP, Xinhua)

Turkey sent 35 trucks with 630 tonnes of flour to the Palestinians, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It was the first batch out of a total of 10,000 tonnes of flour to be provided by the Turkish Red Crescent. Turkey was working on sending urgent food aid worth US\$ 1 million to the Palestinians through UNRWA, and would also donate \$1 million to the Palestinian people by the end of 2006 for the development of small- and medium-scale industries in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the statement added. (Xinhua)

19

At least three Palestinians were killed in exchanges of fire after an IDF paratrooper unit surrounded a compound in Nablus. According to the IDF, wanted Fatah militants were holed up in the compound, which houses the Palestinian Preventative Service in the city. IDF bulldozers razed part of the compound. The IDF also arrested five wanted militants throughout the West Bank before dawn. (Ha’aretz)

Six Palestinians were killed and five IDF soldiers were injured in clashes in the central Gaza Strip. There IDF tanks moved into the El-Maghazi refugee camp before dawn under cover of machine-gun fire in the latest incursion in its three-week military push in the seaside territory. At least two of the Palestinians killed in both gunfights and airstrikes were civilians, and the rest were Hamas militants. During the clashes 14 people, including children, were wounded when tank shells hit two houses in the camp, bringing the wounded in the incursion to 52, the hospital officials said.

(Ha’aretz)

Israeli security forces arrested in the town of Hod Hasharon a Palestinian suspected of planning to carry out a suicide bombing in the area. (Ha’aretz)

IDF troops stormed at pre-dawn the office of the *Palestine News Agency (Wafa)* in Ramallah. In a statement, *Wafa* denounced the act of Israeli soldiers. At the same time, the IDF stormed the Ramallah Governorate Headquarters, ransacked the property and arrested five Palestinians including two police guards. (Wafa)

The PA Health Ministry said that 135 Palestinians had been killed and 410 injured, including 210 children, since the beginning of the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights condemned the Israeli killing of 9 Palestinians and wounding of 81 others in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In a press release, the Center said that 6 of the dead, including 2 children, were killed in the El-Maghazi refugee camp, while the rest were killed in Nablus. The Center condemned the acts of willful killing and destruction perpetrated by the IDF, saying these crimes were a form of reprisal and collective punishment against Palestinians, which constituted a violation of article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. (Wafa)

In an interview with the weekly *Al-Mussawer* magazine, President Hosni Mubarak said that Egypt’s mediation had resumed with the Palestinians over the captured Israeli soldier in Gaza, predicting a solution to the crisis soon. (AFP)

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a meeting to discuss the reports of the Chairman on the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Vienna on 27 and 28 June 2006, and of the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Moscow on 7 and 8 June 2006. (DPR)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbou expressed grave concern over the continued killing and maiming of civilians in Lebanon, Israel and the OPT. “The scale of the killings in the region, and their predictability, could engage the personal criminal responsibility of those involved, particularly those in a position of command and control,” she said. (www.ohchr.org)

The Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health called for an independent investigation into whether the bombing of Gaza Strip’s power station was a war crime. (www.ohchr.org)

An [OCHA report](#) said that the IDF had carried out 168 air strikes and fired more than 1,000 shells into the Gaza Strip, while Palestinian militants had fired 177 rockets towards Israel since the beginning of the current offensive. (www.humanitarianinfo.org)

20

IDF forces killed three Palestinians, including a teenager, and wounded six in the Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, PA officials said.

A 10-year-old Palestinian girl, who had been wounded in an IDF air strike the previous day, had died. (AP)

The IDF dropped leaflets over the Gaza Strip warning that homes hiding weapons would be attacked. (AP)

The IDF said that it had destroyed three tunnels used by Palestinian militants in the southern Gaza Strip. (Xinhua)

Five Qassam rockets were launched into Israel. One person was injured and some damage was caused in Sderot. (Ynetnews)

The siege of the PA security compound in Nablus by the IDF continued. In Ramallah, undercover Border Police arrested a “wanted” Palestinian. (AP)

An Israeli settler deliberately ran over a Palestinian student with his car in Nablus and sped off, PA security sources said. (Wafa)

Israel’s Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres rejected Turkey’s appeal for a ceasefire. “We have the greatest respect for [Turkey’s] Prime Minister Erdogan, but the problem is the following: Hamas and the Hezbollah will not agree to a ceasefire,” he said. (AFP)

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan renewed his urgent appeal for an end to the civilian carnage in Lebanon and northern Israel. Mr. Annan also voiced concern about Gaza, where Palestinians “are suffering deeply, with well over 100, many of them civilians, killed in the last month alone”. He called for “an immediate cessation of indiscriminate and disproportionate violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a reopening of closed crossing-points, without which Gaza will continue to be sucked into a downward spiral of suffering and chaos, and the region further inflamed”. The Secretary-General emphasized that only a simultaneous implementation of different elements of the package he had put forward would allow for the transformation of the cessation of hostilities into a durable ceasefire. “When this is achieved, the international community will need to develop a framework for the final delineation of the borders of Lebanon and a decisive revival of the Middle East Peace Process”, he said. (UN News Centre)

India called for the immediate release of PA ministers and PLC members arrested by Israel, India’s External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said. He also expressed India’s deep concern about Israel’s “disproportionate retaliation for the abduction of an Israeli soldier.” (Xinhua)

“The first, un-postponable step in the current critical situation should be an immediate halt to firing and bloodshed,” Russia’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement. “Lebanon and the Palestinian territories are on the verge of a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.” (AFP, www.mid.ru)

Pope Benedict XVI called for a day of prayer on 23 July for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East. (AFP)

21

Israeli forces blew up a government building in Nablus killing one person, a 40 year-old medic, when part of a wall of the building collapsed. The attack came on a third day of a standoff between militants and Israeli troops and tanks in the city. Friday's death toll raised to six the number of Palestinians who have been killed in the fighting, including three members of an armed group of Fatah. The army said that some of the Palestinians were affiliated with Hezbollah guerrillas. (AP, DPA)

An Israeli tank fired a shell at a building in northern Gaza City killing Mohamed Harare, his mother and his two brothers, and three others were injured. Palestinians said he was sleeping on the roof of his house, but an Israeli spokesman said he was on his balcony with another man aiming an anti-tank missile. Three other people, including a three year-old girl, were wounded in an incident in eastern Gaza City, one day after the Israeli military warned that civilian homes storing weapons and sheltering terrorists were now a target. A local official from UNRWA said 16 hectares of fields, mostly olive groves, were ravaged in the operation and 10 homes had been damaged by tanks and bulldozers. (AFP, DPA, Jerusalem Post)

Israeli forces withdrew from central Gaza Strip, ending a three-day operation in which 15 Palestinians were killed. (AP, DPA)

Palestinians fired two Qassam rockets at a Negev kibbutz causing no injuries or damage. (Ha'aretz)

Norway announced it would give US\$ 25 million in aid to Lebanon and to the Palestinians to help civilians cope with the humanitarian crisis. The money will be distributed through non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, the Foreign Ministry said. (AFP)

Israeli forces occupying the offices of the Palestinian Red Crescent relief agency must leave immediately, the ICRC said in a statement. The ICRC said that by taking the building the Israeli military had shown "grave disregard" for its obligation of respect and protect medical units – a key plank of the Geneva Conventions. During a military operation in Nablus, which began on Tuesday, Israeli forces occupied the premises of the Red Crescent, blocking the entrance and hindering the movement of ambulances, patients and staff, the ICRC said. (AFP)

22

Palestinian officials said that the main militant groups, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, reached an agreement to stop firing rockets if Israel called off the Gaza offensive it had launched last month, after Palestinian militants captured a soldier in a raid on an Israeli military post. The militant groups later denied an agreement had been reached. The agreement was sponsored by PA President Abbas. Under the reported deal, the rocket fire was supposed to end at midnight. (AP)

Egyptian and Israeli officials held a meeting to coordinate ways to facilitate the entry of aid-loaded trucks into the Gaza Strip via Israel, the Egyptian official news agency MENA reported. The meeting focused on ways to re-operate Kerem Shalom crossing on the Gaza-Israel border to allow foodstuffs and other relief into Gaza. The meeting was attended by security and customs officers from both sides, along with representatives of international organizations and European Union observers. (AFP)

23

Palestinian armed groups in Gaza fired five rockets at Israel, despite reports that they had agreed to halt such attacks. (AP)

PA President Abbas told militants that Israel was prepared to end its Gaza offensive if they agreed to stop firing rockets, Abbas' aides and militants said. Palestinian factions said Abbas told them that Israel passed the proposal on to him through a foreign Government during meetings in Gaza. Abbas did not name the Government. Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mark Regev declined to discuss any specific proposals but said any resolution to the crisis must include the return of Cpl. Shalit. (Reuters)

Diplomatic efforts to stop the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip continued with meetings between President Abbas and Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Britain in Ramallah (Xinhua)

In Ramallah, President Abbas held talks with the British Foreign Office Minister, Kim Howells, and with Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at two separate meetings. Discussions centred on possible ways to stop deterioration in the region and the Palestinian economic hardship that erupted because of international aid suspension. (Wafa)

Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay defended his Government's pro-Israeli policy as "a voice of reason" and denied that Canada was following the United States in siding with Israel in the current Middle East fighting. Canada's response to Israel's offensive in Lebanon is a principled response to a particular set of circumstances, Mr. MacKay said, referring to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's opposition to calls for a ceasefire. (Xinhua)

The Norwegian Government decided to provide additional 200 million Norwegian kroner (US\$ 32 million) in humanitarian aid to Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, according to reports from Oslo. This was the second allotment after Norway's offer of 100 million Norwegian kroner (\$16 million) allocated on 16 July. (Xinhua)

The Kuwaiti Government announced that it would donate US\$ 20 million to help alleviate the sufferings endured currently by the Lebanese and Palestinian people, the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported. (Xinhua)

24

An Israeli helicopter fired a missile at a two-storey house at the entrance to the Shati refugee camp next to Gaza City, causing damage but no casualties, Palestinians said. The house belonged to a Hamas activist. The military said the target was a storage facility for rockets and weapons of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. (AP)

Israeli artillery shelled Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, killing five Palestinians and wounding at least nine people, hospital officials said. Three of the fatalities were identified as Saadi Ahmed, 30; Sadek Nasser, 32; and Nasser's 14-year-old cousin, Salah Nasser. The Israeli army said that the attack was carried out after militants had fired from Beit Lahia at least seven rockets at southern Israel, causing no casualties. In one artillery attack, Israeli shells exploded near an apartment building, leaving a large crater in the ground. Another shell exploded in an open space between two apartment buildings, hitting residents standing there. Before the attacks, Israel had asked Palestinian security officials to warn the residents of Beit Lahia to remain indoors during the shelling, a security official said. (AP)

The Israeli military hit the Rashidiyah Palestinian refugee camp in south Lebanon with artillery fire, wounding six people, police said. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat denounced the attack against Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon. According to Voice of Palestine radio, Mr. Erakat said, "Israel seeks to drag the region into an open war by targeting the Palestinian refugee camps". (AFP, Xinhua)

A five-year-old Palestinian girl was killed and three other people wounded by an Israeli artillery shell that landed on a house near the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. (AFP, Reuters)

Israeli forces arrested 11 Palestinians in the West Bank: 4 in Hebron, 3 in Tulkarm, 2 in Jenin, and 2 in Bethlehem. (Wafa)

PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said he would like the visiting US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to force Israel to end its nearly month-old offensive in the Gaza Strip. Ms. Rice will meet Israeli and Palestinian officials during her trip, but will not hold talks with Mr. Haniyeh. He said: "All that we ask the American administration is to take a moral stance toward the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian suffering and to bear its responsibility as a superpower in this world", calling on the United States "to restrain the Israeli aggression and stop it." (AP)

Germany said that it was hopeful for progress on the release of Gilad Shalit, the captured Israeli soldier in Gaza, after its Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, met with regional leaders during the weekend. "We have a certain hope that these efforts may lead to a result in the foreseeable future," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Martin Jaeger said at a Government news conference, praising the role of Egypt and PA President Abbas. (Reuters)

The Finish Foreign Ministry announced that the Finnish Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja, whose country currently holds the Presidency of the European Union, was to travel to the Middle East for talks on the situation in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. (AFP)
After meeting with visiting Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Jakarta, the Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, called on the UN Security Council or the General Assembly to produce a solution to the escalating conflict in the Middle East. "I am still of the view that the UN Security Council should meet and if it cannot, a UN General Assembly meeting should be convened to get a concrete solution," said President Yudhoyono. (AFX International)

25

A 29-year-old Palestinian died of wounds sustained on 20 July during an Israeli ground operation in the El-Maghazi refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. (AFP, WAFA)

Eight Palestinians were wounded in Israeli air strikes on three houses in the Gaza Strip that the Israeli military suspected of being used by Islamic Jihad members to store rockets. One house in eastern Gaza City was reduced to rubble by one rocket, which caused four injuries. In Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, two houses sustained massive damage in the air raid, in which four other people were wounded. (AFP, Reuters)

An Israeli aircraft hit with one missile a house in the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun, wounding one Palestinian woman, medics and eyewitnesses reported. (Xinhua)

Two Palestinians in Khan Yunis and another two in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip were wounded when Israeli artillery fire hit the towns, medical sources said. (WAFA)

Israeli forces arrested 11 Palestinians in Hebron and four others in Nablus. (WAFA)

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired home-made rockets at the southern Israeli town of Ami-Oz, near the border with Gaza, wounding one person. (AP)

PA President Abbas said that he was doing his utmost to secure the release of kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit and to stop rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip. (The Jerusalem Post)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with PA President Abbas in Ramallah. The two talked about getting additional aid to the Palestinian people, as well as the state of an Israeli soldier captured last month by Palestinian militants. "I assured the President that we had great concerns about the sufferings of innocent people throughout the region.... Even as the Lebanon situation is resolved, we must remain focused on what is happening here," Ms. Rice told reporters. (AP, Reuters)

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal stated during his meeting with Russia's President Putin: "We consider the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved to be at the basis of the current conflict in Lebanon." (www.kremlin.ru)

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland criticized Israel's strike last month on the sole power plant in the Gaza Strip as a "clear" example of disproportionate use of force. "Civilian infrastructure is protected.... The law is very clear," Mr. Egeland told reporters as he toured the power plant. "This plant is more important for hospitals, for sewage, and for water of civilians than for any Hamas man or Jihad man with some kind of a missile on his shoulder who doesn't need electricity, as a mother trying to care for her child," he added. Inspecting the ruined transformers with Mr. Egeland, Rafiq Maliha, project manager at the plant, said direct losses amounted to US\$ 10 million, rising to more than \$15 to \$16 million taking production losses into account. On an "optimistic" count, he said it would take 8 to 10 months to repair the transformers, but that partial production would be restored within three to four months, although there was "no clear fund" to pay for the work. (AFP, AP)

In a joint communiqué, the Foreign Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting in Kuala Lumpur expressed concern over "the deteriorating situation and the escalation of violence in the Middle East, particularly the disproportionate, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Lebanon," and "called for an immediate ceasefire and urged the international community and the United Nations Security Council to get all parties in the conflicts to adhere to the ceasefire under UN supervision with the participation of countries that are able to do so." (www.aseansec.org)

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia decided to give US\$ 250 million to the Palestinians in aid to help rebuild the Palestinian territories, according to state media. (AFP, Reuters)

26

Fifteen Palestinians, including a toddler, were killed as the IDF conducted air strikes and launched an incursion involving some 50 armoured vehicles into Gaza City. At least six of the dead were identified as armed, including four from Hamas. Some 45 Palestinians, including two journalists working for *Palestine TV*, were wounded. In a new tactic, IDF aircraft attacked several houses of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists shortly after warning residents by phone to leave. (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz)

Armed Palestinians fired three Qassam rockets into Israel, two of which were claimed by Hamas' military wing, which also said it had destroyed three Israeli tanks. The IDF reported no hits or casualties. (AFP, The Jerusalem Post)

A dozen IDF jeeps entered Ramallah, surrounding a building used by the PA Preventive Security Service. (AFP)

Israeli strikes killed 23 people in the Gaza Strip, including 16 militants, a mother and her two young daughters, another child and a disabled man. In addition, 76 Palestinians were wounded. Israeli aircrafts, tanks, and artillery-supported bulldozers drove into north-east Gaza, flattening orchards and greenhouses to deprive cover to militants firing rocket into Israel, the army said. Israel had killed 140 Palestinians since it began its assault, about half of whom were civilians. "This is a horrible situation, and we urge the international community to notice the continuing Israeli in Gaza immediately.... I am afraid these numbers are going to multiply if we continue to be the forgotten zone in this region," said Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat. (AP, AFP, Ha'aretz)

PA President Abbas said that the Israeli targeting of Palestinian citizens and infrastructure would not solve the problem, but would complicate the situation and lead the region towards more tension and instability. (WAFA)

Prime Minister Olmert told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that Israel would not exchange prisoners for the kidnapped soldiers. (The Jerusalem Post)

Islamic Jihad urged Palestinian factions to carry out bombing attacks in Israel and to continue rocket attacks on Israeli settlements in response to "Israeli crimes in Palestine and Lebanon", in a press conference at the Ramattan News Agency in the Gaza Strip. (BBC)

Palestinian Attorney-General Ahmad al-Mughanni decided to ban the use of the blocked caller ID system for users of the Jawwal and Paltel mobile phone companies, Bethlehem-based *Ma'an* news agency reported. The decision was made "to prevent some groups from exploiting this system to scare civilians", after reports that Israeli intelligence officers contacted some Palestinians, ordering them to evacuate their houses about to be bombarded. (BBC)

Iraq's Vice-President Tariq al-Hashimi said he had been following "the unjust Israeli aggression on Palestine and Lebanon with extreme anxiety. I strongly condemn this unprecedented bullying and add my voice to those calling for an immediate cessation of violence." (AP)

"We are interested in defending our camps," Fatah leader in Lebanon Abu al-Aynain told *Al-Arabiya* TV after Israeli missiles fell near the Rashidieh refugee camp. "We can't stay out of the battle if Israel invades south Lebanon." (The Jerusalem Post)

Bangladesh planned to send humanitarian assistance to Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zahirul Huq said. (AP)

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A Palestinian died of wounds sustained during his arrest by the IDF in the West Bank town of Kfar Kadum a day earlier. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli gunfire killed three Palestinians, including Amalah Najer, a 75 year-old Palestinian woman in the Gaza Strip, as well as Aid Kulab, a 16-year-old boy and Yussef Shuaib, a 23-year-old man, and injured 13 Palestinians – three in critical condition, emergency services said. According to Israeli sources, two of the fatalities were members of the Islamic Jihad. (Xinhua, Reuters, AFP, DPA, AP, YNet News)

The IDF destroyed the home of Omar el Mamluk, who had 15 children, after he got a phone call telling him to empty the house in 15 minutes. (Chicago Tribune)

The IDF said its troops operating in the Gaza City neighbourhood of Shijaiya shot an armed Palestinian who approached them wearing a bomb belt. The belt then exploded. The body of a 22-year-old Palestinian was found in the area the next morning. (AFP, DPA)

A Palestinian youth was shot and killed by two Israeli border policemen after he opened fire on them with a pistol at a checkpoint on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem, wounding one of them seriously and the other slightly before they returned fire. (AFP, AP, DPA)

Two Palestinians died of their wounds: a man hit by an airstrike in eastern Gaza City and an 18-year-old who was hit when a tank shell fell near his house in northern Gaza. (AP)

Mahmud Qdami, 16, who was hit by two bullets to the stomach on 21 July during an IDF incursion in Nablus, died of his injuries in a Jordanian hospital, his family said. (AFP)

Israeli police found a burned car near the “Karnei Shomron” settlement and the village of Abus some 20 km east of Qalqilya, with a charred body inside, police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Israel Radio said the victim was an Israeli settler who was kidnapped and killed by Palestinian militants after going into the area to get his car fixed. He was later identified as Danny Ya'akovi, the physician of the “Yakir” settlement. The radio said that he had stopped his car to pick up someone dressed as a religious Jew. (AFP, AP, DPA, The Jerusalem Post)

The Political Committee of the PLC announced that it was presenting an integrated initiative that will be adopted nationally in a bid to thwart the Israeli Government's aim to liquidate the Palestinian question. The Committee is headed by MP Abdullah Abdullah of Fatah and Salah Al-Bardaweel of Hamas. (Daily News)

Doctors in the Gaza Strip said that they had never seen burn injuries that were concentrated so much in the lower body and causing such a high propensity of amputations. The Palestinian Health Ministry already called for an independent inquiry. A piece of plastic with the word “test” written on it had been found. Médecins sans Frontières said its emergency doctor, Régis Garrigues, who had travelled regularly to Gaza, “noted the particular gravity and severity of injuries” from the latest hostilities. (AFP)

PA President Abbas, speaking in Rome after meeting with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, said that intense negotiations were under way to free Cpl. Gilad Shalit: “Efforts are in place that lead us to believe a solution is imminent. I hope that the soldier is in good health and can soon return to his family.” Hamas later denied that the soldier would be released soon. PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, however, met leaders of 12 Palestinian factions in Gaza City to discuss a draft proposal for ending an Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip. Hamas spokesman Abu Obaida told reporters that any deal would have to include a release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, saying, “No politician dares to demand handing the soldier over without a return”. But Defence Minister Amir Peretz reiterated in a news conference in Tel Aviv the same night that Israel had “no intention whatsoever to negotiate with Hamas.” (AP, DPA)

A PA official confirmed to The Jerusalem Post that US\$ 100 million provided by the Arab League and Saudi Arabia to PA President Abbas were used to make “down payments” this week to all civil servants in the PA, including the Prime Minister and all the Cabinet Ministers. The official stressed that the money was given to the PA and not to Hamas directly, but that there could be no discrimination in the payment of Government workers. Only a fraction of the total salaries owed to workers was paid. (The Jerusalem Post)

EU said it had started paying allowances to Palestinian doctors and nurses to support health services. EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner made the announcement in a visit to Gaza. Her office said in a statement that the EU planned to make a “modest” payment directly to the bank accounts of up to 13,000 health workers. (AFP, Reuters)

EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner told AFP after a visit to the Gaza Strip that the situation was critical: “There is a situation of total crisis in the Gaza Strip. The EU clearly sees that the civilian population is suffering. We hope that there will be immediate work to put to a stop the violence on both sides.” (AFP)

Turkey sent more humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, a total of 51 trucks carrying 870 tonnes of flour, sanitary and medical equipment. It was the second batch of humanitarian aid provided by the Turkish Red Crescent. (Xinhua)

Reporters without Borders (RSF) condemned the targeting of Palestinian journalists in the Gaza Strip. “Journalists and other media workers have repeatedly been the victims of deliberate actions, especially in recent weeks” the RSF said. (Wafa)

At the confirmation hearings in Washington, US Permanent Representative to the UN John Bolton said there should “absolutely” be a “viable, contiguous Palestinian State.” (The Washington Post)

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Anass Zomnutt, 13, was killed by Israeli gunfire as he stood on the roof of his house at the edge of the Jabaliya refugee camp north-east of Gaza City.

Also, the body of Mohammed Abu Saqran, a Hamas member, was found in the camp after the IDF troops left. (AFP, AP)

Israeli troops withdrew from the eastern Gaza City neighbourhood of Shijaiya after a two-day incursion that killed 29 Palestinians. Israel said that it had been operating there to stop the launching of Qassam rockets into Israel. PA Prime Minister Haniyeh said after Friday prayers that his Government and other Palestinian factions had been working closely with the Egyptians in the past few hours to end the Israeli offensive. “I hope that the exit of Israeli forces today is the beginning of an Israeli commitment to end the aggression the Palestinians have been under,” he said. (AP, DPA)

A 14-year-old Palestinian was killed in one of several Israeli air strikes overnight. In these attacks, three Palestinian houses were struck in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, to the north of Gaza City, and in the city's Shijaiya quarter, and a small metal workshop in Khan Yunis. The IDF said the houses were used by the armed wing of Hamas to store weapons, while the workshop belonged to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The homeowners said they had received phone calls from IDF officers, giving them advance warnings to evacuate their homes. The owner of the house in Beit Lahia reportedly refused to flee, despite the warning, and was critically wounded. Nine people, including two children, were reportedly wounded in the Khan Yunis strike. (AP, DPA)

Several Qassam rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at southern Israel in the morning, with one landing near a kindergarten south of Ashkelon and slightly injuring two children by shrapnel. The Islamic Jihad said that it had launched the rocket. (AFP, DPA)

Israeli police used stun grenades to disperse hundreds of Palestinian youths who were trying to gain access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem for Friday prayers. No injuries were reported. Because of the ban, hundreds of Muslim worshippers kneeled in prayer on sidewalks outside the mosque complex, while Israeli police on foot and mounted on horses looked on. The day before, police prevented what they said was a Palestinian mass wedding at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and did not allow anyone under 45 to enter. Normally, Israeli authorities limit entrance only to men, but on Thursday the ban encompassed women as well. (AP, Xinhua)

Israeli media reported that Israel planned to raze houses and other structures just inside the Gaza Strip to stop Palestinian militants from using them as cover to dig tunnels for attacks and smuggling. The *YNet* news website quoted an unnamed senior officer in the IDF Southern Command as saying the aim was to "clean" a 1-km-wide strip of land. It was unclear if this meant southern Gaza, where most tunnels have been found, or the entire Gaza Strip. Spokeswomen for the IDF and the Defence Ministry said that they had not heard of the plan. (*Reuters*)

A 40-year-old Palestinian man died from wounds he sustained when his house was hit by Israeli forces the day before. (*AP*)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for kidnapping and killing an Israeli settler in the West Bank. It said in a statement that its members had kidnapped Danial Ya'akovi, 59, and then had killed him and burned his body along with his car near Qalqilya. (*Reuters, Xinhua*)

British Prime Minister Tony Blair was seeking a UN Security Council resolution by next week to defuse the Middle East conflict, his official spokesman told reporters aboard the Prime Minister's plane as it headed to Washington, D.C., from London. The spokesman said that Mr. Blair wanted to step up "the urgency, the pace of diplomacy in identifying the practical steps that are necessary to bring about a ceasefire" in Lebanon, and added: "Clearly also we want to identify the means to de-escalate the problems in Gaza and resume the process of the Road Map." (*AFP*)

The Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Pakistan held talks on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Kuala Lumpur to discuss "their grave concern over the deteriorating situation and unabated violence" in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, according to a joint statement. The Foreign Ministers also endorsed Malaysia's proposal to convene an emergency meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Executive Committee and Friends of the Chairman of the 10th Islamic Summit Conference on 3 August in Malaysia to discuss the Middle East issues. (*AP, Bernama, Xinhua*)

A group of 21 Indonesian religious leaders of different denominations, including the Indonesian Churches Association visited the UN office in Jakarta and met with UN representative George Petersen. "We called on the United Nations to hold a special session by either the Security Council or the General Assembly" to end conflicts in the Middle East, said Din Syamsuddin, chairman of the country's second largest Muslim group, Muhammadiyah. (*Xinhua*)

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Israeli undercover troops killed Hani Awjjan, 29, the leader of the Islamic Jihad's military wing in Nablus, and Amid al-Masri, 25, of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Israeli troops, disguised as Palestinians, came to arrest Mr. Awjjan while he was playing soccer with friends and relatives.

The IDF confirmed soldiers operated in Nablus and said that a militant had been killed in an exchange of fire. (*AFP, AP*)

A spokesman for the PA Health Ministry said that four Palestinians had died overnight from wounds sustained in Israeli offensives in the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli tanks moved back into the Gaza Strip. Israeli ground forces reportedly launched a "limited incursion" near the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing between Gaza and Israel in what the IDF said was an attempt to destroy tunnels and "neutralize" bombs. Two people were reportedly injured by tank shells that had landed near residential areas. (*AP, Reuters*)

PA President Abbas said that his Government had no intention of teaming up with Hezbollah on negotiating the release of Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. "Our brothers in Lebanon have their own special case ... and we have our special case," he said after meetings in Alexandria with Egyptian President Mubarak. (*AP*)

PA President Abbas held talks with Saudi King Abdullah in Jeddah "in the context of efforts to formulate a joint Arab position with the aim of bringing an end to the Israeli aggression in Palestine and Lebanon," spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh told *AFP*. Mr. Abu Rudeineh also said Mr. Abbas had "thanked King Abdullah for his ongoing material and political support for the Palestinians, most recently his decision to provide 250 million dollars for reconstruction in the Palestinian territories." An aide of Mr. Abbas said that Riyadh had transferred US\$ 46 million to the PA earlier in the week.

The transfer amounts to a half of the Saudi contribution of \$92.4 million, intended to cover the period from mid-October 2005 to mid-October 2006, under a resolution adopted at an Arab summit in Khartoum in March. (*AFP*)

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Israeli aircraft destroyed a house belonging to a Hamas member in the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood of Gaza City. Israel had warned the occupants to leave, and the house had been empty. An IDF spokesman confirmed the strike and said that the missiles had been aimed at a workshop manufacturing munitions for Hamas.

Another airstrike destroyed a house in Beit Hanoun belonging to a member of the Popular Resistance Committees, who had also been notified of the impending strike beforehand. "It was a facility used to store weaponry," an IDF spokeswoman said, confirming the attack. Eight people were wounded in the strikes, three seriously. Israeli aircraft also fired missiles near Rafah at a site where the Israelis said that the Palestinians had been tunnelling under the Gaza-Egypt border. Palestinian officials said that electric cables had been destroyed in the attack, cutting power in Rafah. (*AFP, AP, Reuters*)

Rockets fired from the Gaza Strip hit a factory in the Israeli town of Sderot, wounding one person. Hamas took responsibility for the attack. (*AFP, AP*)

Israeli troops arrested two Palestinians with explosives belts near Nablus, the IDF said. (*AP, Reuters*)

Hundreds of Palestinian protesters, some throwing stones and others firing assault rifles, attacked the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator building in Gaza City at the end of a rally against Israel's bombing of Qana. UN staff were inside the compound at the time, but managed to escape after UN guards let off tear gas canisters. A UN official said that the compound, which includes scores of buildings, was ransacked and eight vehicles damaged. At least seven people were wounded, including four policemen, officials at the Al-Quds and Shifa hospitals said. Five of the injured were hit by rocks and the other two by ricochets from the gunfire when security officials fired into the air to disperse the crowd. The protesters, who were waving Lebanese and Hezbollah flags and burning UN flags, quickly dispersed when PA President Abbas ordered Presidential Guards and PA police to close the compound, which also includes the World Bank and the Presidential Guest Palace. UN Special Coordinator Alvaro de Soto, asked why the UN was targeted, said in an interview: "They were venting their anger against the international community about the current situations" in Gaza and Lebanon. (*AP, Reuters*)

The Qana bombing "has crossed all red lines," Munshir al-Masri, a Hamas spokesman said. "We confirm that all options are open for the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance to respond to this terrorist crime." The Islamic Jihad's spokesman, Abu Ahmad, said, "After continuous attacks and the large massacres committed by the Zionist enemy in Gaza, the West Bank, in south Lebanon and in Qana this morning, new instructions have been given to the military branch of the movement, particularly in the West Bank". (*AFP*)

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Nahid al-Shambary, 16, was killed when the IDF shelled his home in Beit Hanoun, and a 2-year-old was lightly wounded in a nearby house. (*AFP, Reuters*)

Yussef Maghari, 32 (Mohammed al-Mughari, 22, according to *Xinhua*), died from wounds he sustained during an Israeli air raid on the Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza on 19 July. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said that its fighters had fired eight rockets into southern Israeli towns and army bases.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the armed wing of the DFLP said in a joint statement that they had launched three rockets at the "Kerem Shalom" crossing in the south-eastern Gaza Strip. The Islamic Jihad also claimed launching two rockets into the Israeli city of Sderot. The IDF said that one rocket had hit a town in the south of Israel, causing no casualties. (*AP, Xinhua*)

The Rafah border crossing will reopen the following day for the second time during current Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip. "We have agreed

with European observers to open Rafah tomorrow for two days to allow people from Gaza to leave,” Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat said.

A spokeswoman for the EU observers at the crossing confirmed that “the border will very likely open” on 1 and 2 August, adding, “There is a 90 per cent chance that it will open” from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (0500 to 1400 GMT). *(AFP)*
