

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

Monthly highlights

- Number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank reaches 483,453. ([3 August](#))
- Israel's Supreme Court gives the State 45 days to submit a new route for the separation wall near Bil'in. ([3 August](#))
- Physicians for Human Rights group says Shin Bet coerced ill Palestinians to become informants. ([4 August](#))
- Israel issues tenders for the construction of 447 housing units in settlements in the Jerusalem area. ([7 August](#))
- Thousands of Palestinians attend the funeral of poet Mahmoud Darwish, who died on 9 August. ([13 August](#))
- Prime Minister Olmert rules out the return of any Palestine refugees during meeting with PA President Abbas. ([14 August](#))
- Israeli Government approves the release of some 200 Palestinian prisoners. ([18 August](#))
- Palestinian factions call for an immediate start of a comprehensive national dialogue. ([21 August](#))
- Two boats carrying international human rights activists countries arrive in Gaza to protest the blockade. ([23 August](#))

1

Israeli forces clashed with some 300 Palestinian, Israeli and international protesters demonstrating against the construction of the separation wall near the village of Ni'lin. (*Ynetnews*)

During the trilateral talks in Washington, the Palestinian negotiating team presented Israeli and American officials with a list of names of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons whose release they were demanding, Head of the Palestinian Negotiating Team Ahmed Qureia said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

2

Some 10 Palestinians were killed in clashes in eastern Gaza City's al-Sheja'eya neighbourhood after Hamas' security forces attempted to arrest members, of the Hillis clan. An estimated 120 to 150 people, including Ahmed Hillis and dozens of his clan's members fled Gaza across Israel to the West Bank. Their escape was aided by the Israeli army, Israeli media reported. In Ramallah, Fatah spokesman in the West Bank Fahni Za'arir demanded that Hamas release all the prisoners. (*DPA*) Israeli police stormed the home of *Al-Manar* TV correspondent Dib Horany in the West Bank. Sources said that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) ransacked the home and arrested Anis Jamil Saqqouri, an employee of the *Ramattan* News Agency in Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

3

In a statement, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights confirmed that 11 people had been killed and 107 injured during the preceding day's battles between Hamas security forces and members of the Hillis family in Gaza City. The injured, according to the report, included 4 women and 18 children. A large number of private homes and property were also destroyed. (*Ma'an News Agency*, www.pchrgaza.org)

Israel began sending Palestinians who had fled the clashes the preceding day back to the Gaza Strip, where they were immediately detained by Hamas security forces, officials said. More than 20 people who were evacuated from Gaza and hospitalized for wounds inflicted in the fighting would remain in Israel until they recovered.

Israel's Human Rights Association, meanwhile, made an urgent appeal to the Supreme Court, requesting it to disallow the return of the fleeing Palestinians to Gaza on the grounds that their lives would be put in danger. (*AFP*)

Hamas leader Said Siam said that 50 prisoners would be released by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Security services would release 40 detained during the battles with the Hillis family, and 10 detained in the days following the 25 July car bombing near Gaza City. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli police arrested a teenager from the West Bank settlement of "Yitzhar" who had hurled rocks at a Palestinian car over the weekend. Mali Ma'ali and her 7-year-old daughter Hadeel were injured on 1 August by rocks and a brick thrown at their car as it was passing through the area. (*Haaretz*)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics released a report on Israeli settlements in 2007, indicating that the number of settlers in the West Bank in 2007 reached 483,453, most of whom lived in Jerusalem. The report indicated that currently there were around 440 occupation sites in the West Bank. Of those, 144 were settlements, 96 were outposts inside settlement boundaries, 109 were outposts outside settlement boundaries, 43 were classified as 'Other', and 48 were military bases. Most settlements, 26 in all, were in the Jerusalem Governorate, 16 of which had been annexed by Israel. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel's High Court of Justice gave the State 45 days to submit a new route for part of the separation wall that ran through lands belonging to Bil'in villagers. The Court said that the Government was ignoring its ruling of September 2007, in which it had determined that the route in the Bil'in area was illegal and ordered the State to devise, within a reasonable time, an alternative route that would be less detrimental. The Court had also instructed the State to plan the route so that it would run through State land, not privately owned Palestinian property. (*Haaretz*)

The Israeli Cabinet was set to approve the release of five Palestinian prisoners as part of the final stage of a prisoner swap with the Lebanese militia Hezbollah.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was expected to present the Cabinet with a document authorizing the ministerial panel charged with prisoner affairs to select the five Palestinians it wished to release within the framework of the deal. (*Haaretz*)

4

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights reported that two Palestinians had been killed and five wounded in the Jaba village and the Qalandiya refugee camp near Ramallah, in clashes between a local armed group and Palestinian police. (www.pchrgaza.org)

Hamas forces arrested three Fatah members in Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian teenager Yusef Amira died of wounds he had sustained as a result of IDF gunfire during the funeral of another victim of Israeli fire in Ni'lin on 30 June, a Ramallah hospital official said. (*AFP*)

The Israeli army arrested 11 Palestinians in Nablus, Palestinian security sources said. Nablus residents said around 20 Israeli army jeeps full of soldiers had raided the city from different directions amid intensive gunfire. No injuries were reported. (*Xinhua*)

Israeli naval gunships opened intensive gunfire at the boats of Gaza Strip fishermen near Khan Yunis, inflicting no injuries. (*Xinhua*)

"We have released [Fatah leader] Zakaria al-Agha as a sign of good will and in response to Arab and Palestinian efforts," said Taher al-Nunu, a spokesman for Hamas. (*AFP*)

Following consultations between Israeli officials and the office of Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas, Israel transferred to the West Bank scores of Fatah activists who had fled the fighting in the Gaza Strip over the weekend, overturning a decision to send them back to Gaza. (*DPA*)

A recent report by the Israeli branch of Physicians for Human Rights revealed that the Shin Bet security service had been trying to coerce Palestinians patients to provide information in exchange for medical treatment in Israel. The Shin Bet denied the charge but said it conducted security checks on Palestinians leaving Gaza to ensure they did not pose a security threat. (*Haaretz*)

The Palestinian Popular Struggle Front condemned the Israeli attack on the peaceful protest march against the separation wall near the village of At-Tuwani in the vicinity of Hebron on 2 August. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas' office in the West Bank issued a statement saying that the Israeli army had released Omar Abdul Razeq, Minister of Finance in the former Hamas-led PA Government. (*Xinhua*)

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that Palestinian Government workers would be paid their July salaries on 7 August, as a result of funds received from the United Arab Emirates. (*AFP, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

5

IDF soldiers fired rubber coated bullets and tear gas at the funeral procession for Yousef Ahmed Amira, who had been killed by the IDF in Ni'lin the previous week, according to local Palestinians. Israeli human rights group B'Tselem said that they were planning to demand a police investigation into the death of Mr. Amira. (*The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

The IDF detained 10 Palestinians in the Nur Shams refugee camp, east of Tulkarm, in Tubas, south of Jenin and in Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

US visas for three Palestinian Fulbright scholars were revoked when US immigration authorities received "new information" about them, Gonzalo Gallegos, a spokesman for the US State Department, said. (*AP*)

First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond promised to ask authorities in Egypt and Israel to aid a Scottish couple wanting to cross the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip to deliver medical supplies to the hospitals. (www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com)

The settler organization Homesh First Movement declared its intention to resettle in Gaza the next time the IDF launched a big operation there. Boaz Haetzni, a leader of the settler organization, said that it was only a matter of time before the next big operation would occur in Gaza and that his organization would follow the IDF there without asking for permission. Mr. Haetzni went on to say that he aimed to resettle in what had been the "Gush Katif" settlement prior to the Israeli disengagement in 2005. (*Haaretz*)

The IDF announced that it would increase its presence in the West Bank to protect Palestinians from being attacked by Israeli settlers. The decision came after settlers hurled a brick at a Palestinian car, wounding a woman and her 7-year-old daughter last week. (*Haaretz*)

A Knesset caucus was formed to look at solutions to the Palestine refugee problem, said Amira Dotan (Kadima), a co-chairperson of the group. Ms. Dotan stated that she wanted to "conduct a dialogue with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and not attempt to force a solution". The other co-chairperson, Beni Alon, suggested a "transfer", that is, a forced relocation of most of the Palestinian refugees from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to third countries, as the solution. (*IRIN*)

6

A 26-year-old Palestinian woman tried to stab security personnel at a checkpoint in southern Jerusalem, *Israel Army Radio* reported. She was overpowered, arrested and taken for interrogation. (*The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli police arrested 23 demonstrators outside the home of IDF Col. Aviv Reshef, the military commander in Ni'lin, near Ramallah, during a protest against the killings of two young Palestinians in the village. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops arrested seven Palestinians, including a municipal council member, in Nablus, witnesses and local sources said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Prime Minister Olmert met with PA President Abbas at Mr. Olmert's official residence in Jerusalem. The meeting was attended by the negotiating teams.

Palestinian officials said the two leaders were expected to discuss the political crisis in Israel and its impact on the peace talks. (*AP, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

Speaking at a conference of Kadima party activists ahead of the scheduled party primary, frontrunner Shaul Mofaz, Israel's Transportation Minister, said he pledged to "keep Jerusalem united as Israel's eternal capital." (*Haaretz*)

Israel freed two West Bank Hamas officials imprisoned over a year ago: Adli Yaish, mayor of Nablus and former Minister of Local Government in the Hamas-led Cabinet, and Issa al-Ja'abari. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

"Hamas will not open the file of the prisoner swap until the occupation literally commits itself to what was agreed upon in the lull deal," said Osama al-Muzini, a Hamas official who follows up the case of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. (*Xinhua*)

Israel freed five Palestinian prisoners as part of a prisoner exchange with Hezbollah, the Prisons Administration said. The prisoners, all minors, were released from Hasharon prison in the West Bank, where they had been jailed for throwing rocks or firebombs; they had been due for release by the end of next year. (*AFP*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered the demolition of the East Jerusalem home of the Palestinian who had killed eight Jewish religious students at a yeshiva in Jerusalem. (*AFP*)

7

A Qassam rocket landed in the western Negev. No damage or casualties were reported. (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post*)

Egyptian security forces discovered 20 tunnels used to smuggle fuel between the Egyptian and Palestinian parts of Rafah. Hundreds of gallons of fuel were confiscated in the operation and four smugglers were arrested. An Egyptian official said the suspects were laying an 800-meter underground pipeline to ship fuel illegally into Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Israeli settlers attacked two British diplomats travelling in an armoured diplomatic car during a visit to the Old City of Hebron. The tour was organized by an Israeli organization called Breaking the Silence, set up by former IDF soldiers who had served in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

Dozens of demonstrators were injured in Ni'lin when Israeli forces responded violently to a march marking the death of Yousif Amira who had been killed by Israeli forces last week. The coordinator of the Ni'lin committee, Ahed Al-Khawajam, said that the Israeli forces took advantage of a mourning period in the village to push forward work on the wall, which local officials said would result in the confiscation of much of the town's farmland. He said the Israeli attacks would not stop the demonstrations, but rather cause them to intensify. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) warned Israel that the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which began on 19 June 2008, was in danger of collapsing within three weeks. A PRC spokesperson stated that the PRC, Hamas and other factions were disappointed with Israel's foot-dragging on opening Gaza's border crossings and prisoner release talks. He stated further that the Palestinian groups had agreed among themselves to give the ceasefire a 10-week trial period, although they did not know whether Hamas had also set a deadline. (*Haaretz, IMEMC, Reuters, Ynetnews*)

Israeli troops invaded the village of Sureef north of Hebron and arrested Naif Brathiye, aged 21. (*IMEMC*)

B'Tselem and Yesh Din human rights organizations criticized the IDF decision removing Lt.-Col. Omri Burberg from his current post and reassigning him, over an incident in which a soldier under his command fired a rubber bullet at a blindfolded and bound Palestinian prisoner. The deal saw Col. Burberg indicted in a military court on a minor charge of "inappropriate behaviour for a commander." B'Tselem described the deal as "disgraceful" and stated: "The Army treats the shooting at point-blank range of a bound man only as inappropriate behaviour. It disgraces the values which it pretends to uphold." (*AFP, AP, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

Israel released four remaining Hamas-associated detainees, Imad Kin'an, Othman Musleh, Hussein Abu Zant and Bilal Ya'ish, who had been arrested for their association with the Al-Itiman real estate company in Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that he did not believe that an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was possible before the end of 2008. He added that he was much more optimistic about advancing economic projects and building the infrastructure of Palestinian institutions and law enforcement. (*Haaretz, IMEMC*)

The European Union announced a donation of €14.7 million (\$22.5 million) to the Palestinian Authority to pay the salaries and pensions of 73,947 Palestinians. The European Union contribution will ensure the current month's payment of salaries and pensions as well as the continued delivery of public services to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel issued tenders for the construction of 447 housing units in settlements in the Jerusalem area: some 130 housing units in "Har Homa" (Jabal Abu Ghneim) and 317 housing units in "Beitar Illit". In addition, 400 units will be constructed in the "Neve Ya'akov" settlement, while 416 units will be built in other West Bank settlements in the area. The Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Saeb Erakat, stated that the latest tender made clear that Israel was choosing settlements over peace. (*Haaretz, IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters*)

It was announced that four Israeli Cabinet Ministers would meet on 11 August to discuss the criteria and names of Palestinian prisoners whom Israeli Prime Minister Olmert had promised to release by the end of the month to PA President Abbas. The panel was expected to broach the divisive issue of changing the criteria to allow for the release of prisoners "with blood on their hands" in return for Gilad Shalit. Palestinian reports suggested that 150 releases were being considered, while Mr. Olmert had promised to release more than 100 prisoners. Israeli sources confirmed that Mr. Abbas had demanded the release of Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader Ahmad Saadat, but it was reported that this demand had been rejected by Mr. Olmert. (*Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency*)

The PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs, Ashraf el-Ajrami, stressed that a final peace agreement could not be reached before closing the file of prisoners. "The issue of prisoners held in Israeli jails is a political issue which is no less important than other permanent status issues. It can only be resolved by setting up a timetable for the release of all the prisoners." Palestinians said that there were over 11,000 prisoners held in Israeli jails, including women and minors under 18 years of age.

(*Xinhua*)

A source in the Office of the Israeli Attorney-General indicated that Israel was trying to overturn arrest warrants issued by the National Court of Spain in July 2008 against six current and former Israeli politicians and senior military officials, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Doron Almog, Moshe Ya'alon, Dan Halutz, Giora Eiland and Mike Herzog on charges of war crimes committed in the Gaza Strip in 2002, including the killing of 15 persons, most of whom were civilians, by a one-ton bomb.

(*The Jerusalem Post*)

8

At dawn, the Israeli army invaded the West Bank cities of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm. In Jenin, the target was the home of leading Islamic Jihad activist Ash-Sheikh Qasem al Sa'di, which was searched and ransacked before he was taken away blindfolded. Two persons described by the Israeli army as "wanted" were taken for interrogation: one from Tulkarm and one from the nearby town of Shweika. (*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

The Gaza Strip is suffering from a severe shortage of Israeli shekels, the currency used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as a result of the Israeli authorities not allowing sufficient reserves of shekels to enter the Gaza Strip, and also because Israeli businesses that deal with Gaza would only trade in shekels. A bank source indicated that banks in Gaza needed between 70 and 100 million shekels in order to resolve the Palestinian salary crisis. It was announced that Israel would allow banks to transfer 72 million shekels (\$20 million) to the Gaza Strip in order to ease the shortage of banknotes. This was intended to pay this week's salaries of the Palestinian Authority's workforce in the Gaza Strip. The money was expected to arrive in Gaza on 11 August. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

Palestinian medical sources reported that the number of patients in the Gaza Strip who had died as a result of not being able to leave for medical treatment had risen to 233, after 6 persons died in the last 24 hours at the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. They were suffering from heart disease, kidney failure, cancer and leukaemia.

(*IMEMC, Ma'an News Agency*)

10

Israeli forces seized two Palestinians in separate incidents in Jenin and Tulkarm. In Jenin, in the northern West Bank, Israeli forces entered the city at 2 a.m., raiding several homes. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Palestinian medical official said that two people had died in a smuggling tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border and five were missing. Area residents said that the men had been trying to smuggle fuel into the Gaza Strip and that some of it apparently spilled, releasing fumes. (*AP*)

Israeli security forces started to use liquid "skunk bombs" to disperse demonstrators in the West Bank. Border police used the new method for the first time a day earlier at a weekly demonstration in the village of Ni'lin near the separation wall. Use of the foul-smelling liquid had been given the green light by medical and legal authorities, police said. It could be hurled by hand or with a special device, forcing most demonstrators to disperse and rush off to change their clothes because of the unbearable stench. (*AFP*)

Egypt sent around 500 riot police to its border with the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of demonstrators on the Gaza Strip side demanded that Egypt open the border to allow humanitarian cases to cross. (*Haaretz*)

11

Three Palestinians were crushed to death when the tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border collapsed. Hamas said Egypt was responsible for the death of eight Palestinians in the tunnel because it had used water, gas and explosives to seal a network of tunnels under its border with the Gaza Strip. (*Reuters*)

Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip hit the western Negev town of Sderot. No other details were available. (*Haaretz*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that a military invasion of the Gaza Strip would not stop cross-border rocket attacks by Palestinian militants, but that the seven-week-old truce mediated by Egypt had halted the barrages for the first time in years. Mr. Barak said if Israeli forces invaded the Gaza Strip and stayed there two years "destroying the Hamas regime ... you control another people against their will." He said such circumstances would strengthen the Palestinians' support in Gaza for Hamas rather than for PA President Abbas and his Fatah Party. He said the numbers of short-range unguided rockets hitting Israel from Gaza had been reduced from hundreds to a handful, and he hoped the truce would last for a year. (*AP, BBC, Haaretz*)

A senior Hamas official said that the Islamic organization was not interested in renewing talks to free the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit until Israel completely lifted the siege on Gaza. (*Haaretz*)

In a statement, Hamas said it completely rejects the entry of any foreign or Arab forces to the West Bank or Gaza under any pretext. It also called for the withdrawal of Israel forces from the Occupied Palestinian Territory without any conditions. The statement followed reports that the PLO was considering declaring the Gaza Strip a rebel region and asking the UN to deploy its forces there. (*Xinhua*)

The Head of Palestinian Negotiating Team, Ahmed Qureia, said, "The negotiations are going on seriously ... but we did not reach an agreement on any final status issues." He told a Fatah meeting in the West Bank, "If Israel continues to reject this and prevent us from achieving our choice [a Palestinian State within 1967 borders], we will call for the alternative solution for the Palestinian people and their leadership - that is, a single bi-national State." (*BBC, Xinhua*)

Hamas renewed its rejection of the recognition of Israel and rejected the principle of establishing a bi-national state for both the Israelis and Palestinians. Hamas spokesperson in the Gaza Strip Sami Abu Zuhri said Mr. Ahmed Qureia's remarks reflected the breakdown of the ongoing peace talks between the PA and Israel.

(*Xinhua*)

A severe cash shortage afflicted the Gaza Strip as tens of thousands of people were unable to withdraw money from banks in the territory. Mohammed Ayyad, a spokesman for the West Bank-based Palestinian Monetary Authority, said that officials were engaged in dialogue with Gaza banks to determine how much money was needed. (*AFP, AP*)

RAM-FM Peace Radio, a music radio station that sought to bring Israelis and Palestinians together, went off the air because of a lack of funding. In April 2008, Israeli police temporarily shut it down, citing a lack of a broadcast permit. (*Haaretz*)

The funeral of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish will be held on 13 August. The procession will begin at the *muqataa* and move to the Ramallah Cultural Palace, where he will be buried. Mr. Darwish died on 9 August after undergoing open-heart surgery in Houston. PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said the Cabinet would hold a special session in Ramallah to honour Mr. Darwish. Mr. Fayyad said, "With the departure of the homeland's knight who wrote sweet lines, the Palestinian people have lost one of its most prominent founders of the Palestinian cultural and national identity. One who eternalized with his poetry the Palestinian struggle, the suffering of a nation whose culture was doomed to be covered, marginalized and lost ... He told the whole world about Palestine's wounds, hope, insistence and pulse ... about its mountains, valleys and plains ... as well as fragrance of almond blossoms and more." (*Ma'an News Agency*)

12

The IDF detained 16 Palestinians in a number of military operations in the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency, www.idf.il*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered the Gaza borders, including Sufa, Nahal Oz and Kami, closed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Senior Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahhar accused the people who had fired rockets against Sderot of collaborating with Israel. Mr. al-Zahhar said that there was a

consensus among Palestinian groups to respect the truce and therefore the persons responsible had provided Israel a pretext to exert pressure on the Palestinian people. (AFP)

A high-ranking Egyptian source said that Egypt would start inviting all Palestinian factions to meetings as of next week to resume intra-Palestinian dialogue. Egyptian mediators would hold bilateral talks first with Palestinian groups to reach a unified stance on the current crisis, *MENA News Agency* quoted the source on condition of anonymity. PA President Abbas welcomed Egypt's invitation to the dialogue, said the source, adding that he had given top priority to ending the intra-Palestinian division. (WAPA)

Israel's Brig-Gen. Avihai Mendelblit of the Israel Defense Forces informed *Reuters* that the Israeli tank crew who had killed a *Reuters* cameraman, Fadel Shana, and eight bystanders in the Gaza Strip four months ago, had acted properly and would not face legal action. He said that troops could not see whether Fadel Shana was operating a camera or a weapon, but were nonetheless justified in firing a shell packed with darts that killed him and eight other Palestinians aged between 12 and 20. (Reuters)

PA President Abbas rejected Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's proposal for a permanent peace agreement. Mr. Olmert's peace plan was to hand over 92.7 per cent of the West Bank and all of Gaza to the Palestinians. In exchange for the land in the West Bank, the proposal sought a 5.5 per cent land swap, giving the Palestinians desert territory next to the Gaza Strip. The land to be annexed by Israel would include the large settlement blocks, and the border would be similar to the present route of the separation wall. Furthermore, the proposal stipulated that Israel was free to expand settlements in the annexed land, while all other settlements were to be evacuated. The question of Jerusalem was not part of the proposal, but was to be resolved at a later stage. In terms of security, the proposal included a demand that the Palestinian State was to be demilitarized and not allowed to have an army. The proposal also rejected the right of return to Israel, other than in exceptional cases of family reunification. A spokesman for President Abbas said that the proposal showed a "lack of seriousness" and that the Palestinian side would "only accept a Palestinian State with territorial continuity, with holy Jerusalem as its capital, without settlements and on the 4 June 1967 boundaries". (AFP, AP, BBC, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, Ynetnews, WAPA, Xinhua)

Palestinian and Israeli security officials met in Jenin for the first time in years. The two sides discussed the issues of roadblocks, checkpoints and the possibility of deploying Palestinian security forces in Jenin to stop IDF operations in the city. The possibility of an amnesty for Palestinian militants, in exchange for them giving up their weapons and ceasing their militant activities, was also raised. (Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

Israel agreed to open the Beituniya checkpoint in the central West Bank in order to allow Palestinian Israelis to travel to Ramallah for the funeral of the poet Mahmoud Darwish, at the request of Knesset member Muhammad Baraka. (Ma'an News Agency)

The World Bank said that Kuwait had donated \$80 million to a trust fund in support of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan, becoming the first Arab State to do so. That contribution brings to \$275 million the amount of funds available from the trust fund and the linked World Bank funds, of which \$148 million had already been disbursed. The financial resources would provide support for education, health care and other vital social services for the Palestinian people and for the economic reforms currently under way, the Bank said. The other contributors to date were Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, France, Norway and Poland. (AFP, The World Bank)

Israeli authorities said that they had managed to significantly curb illegal trash dumping in the West Bank by Israeli companies. (IRIN)

The Israeli Defense Ministry proposed the construction of a new settlement near East Jerusalem to entice settlers to move away from the unauthorized settlement outpost of "Migron." (Reuters)

13

Twenty Israeli military vehicles, including bulldozers, invaded the West Bank town of Taffuh, west of Hebron. Israeli troops fired rubber-coated metal bullets and sound grenades at the Palestinians, who responded by throwing stones at them. No injuries were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israel said it would reopen four crossing points with the Gaza Strip, including the Kerem Shalom crossing, which had been closed for four months. Hamas official Hatim Uweida said they had not received notification from the Israeli side regarding the opening of Kerem Shalom. The Sufa crossing, used for commercial and humanitarian goods, was functioning normally, Mr. Uweida added. Around 80 to 85 truckloads of food products usually pass through the Sufa crossing daily. (Ma'an News Agency)

Reuters said that it was deeply disturbed by the conclusions of the Israeli military on the death of the agency's cameraman and other Palestinian bystanders. The agency wrote to Brig-Gen. Avihai Mendelblit with a number of questions, including one asking precisely why the soldiers had ruled out the possibility that Fadel Shana was a cameraman. In Jerusalem, the Foreign Press Association said it was disappointed with the report which seemed to give soldiers licence to fire on journalists without ascertaining their target. In New York, Joel Campagna of the Committee to Protect Journalists said: "These findings mean that a journalist with a camera is at risk of coming under fire and there's not that much that can be done. That's unacceptable. It's difficult to believe ... that the IDF took the necessary precautions to avoid causing harm to civilians — as it is obliged to do under international law." (Reuters)

In Ramallah, thousands of Palestinians attended the solemn funeral of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. They marched behind the casket, which was draped in a Palestinian flag and driven through Ramallah in a black pickup truck. Mr. Darwish, 67, died on 9 August following heart surgery in a Houston hospital. PA President Abbas declared a mourning period of three days. Addressing a crowd of some 500, including foreign diplomats and a small group of Israeli peace activists, Mr. Abbas eulogized the poet as a pioneer, a leader and a teacher. Mr. Darwish was buried next to Ramallah's Cultural Palace, where he frequently gave poetry readings, while an honour guard fired a 21-gun salute. The building was renamed the Darwish Cultural Palace. (AP)

14

Two Palestinians were arrested after their homes were stormed and ransacked by the Israeli forces. Thirty-six-year-old Anwar Aj-Jamal was arrested in central Hebron, while twenty-year-old Nadir Shawamreh was arrested in the village of Deir Al-Asal Al-Fauqa. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF arrested Firas Tashtush in Nablus on the allegation that he had taken part in attacks against IDF troops in the area and was suspected of planning to supply militants with explosives, thereby violating a signed pledge to cease all terror-related activities. (AP, Haaretz)

The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem indicated that since the beginning of 2007 the IDF had investigated only 4 out of 99 cases in which 189 Palestinians had been killed. (Haaretz)

Two Palestinians, Hamzah Sarawi and Imad Darwish, both aged 18, turned themselves in to Israeli soldiers after their families had received dozens of death threats from Israeli intelligence officials. The same day, seven Palestinians were detained during an IDF raid at the Dheishah camp south of Bethlehem. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Egyptian Government informed Hamas that it would not reopen the Rafah border crossing until IDF soldier Gilad Shalit was released. A Hamas official described the condition set by Egypt as "completely unacceptable". The same day Egyptian negotiators stated that Gilad Shalit could be home by November. (Ma'an The Jerusalem Post)

Residents of Ni'lin village located in the West Bank said that 11 persons demonstrating against the separation wall had been injured by Israeli troops. Most protesters were wounded by rubber bullets while a Swedish national was beaten and her leg broken. (AP, Ynetnews)

Islamic Jihad said that the ceasefire with Israel in the Gaza Strip was "fragile and was expected to end at any time." "We are using the lull to prepare fighters for the coming phase of confrontation," a spokesman for the group said. The group also said that the ceasefire had witnessed 10 Israeli violations in its eighth week. Most of the violations during the week had targeted the Palestinian fishermen and their boats in the sea to prevent them from fishing, the group said in its weekly report. (Xinhua)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert told PA President Abbas that Israel would not allow the return of any Palestine refugee as part of a future statehood deal. "The Prime Minister never offered to absorb 20,000 refugees in Israel. The Prime Minister again reiterates that under any future agreement there will not be any return of Palestinian refugees to Israel in any number ... The Prime Minister's stance is that the establishment of a Palestinian State is meant to provide an answer to the absorption of Palestinian refugees. Those refugees who are not returned to a Palestinian State will be dealt with by an international force." (Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Reuters, Xinhua)

Israeli representatives involved in negotiations on the release of soldier Gilad Shalit had been told by Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman that he planned to finalize deals with Hamas within three months. Meanwhile, it had been reported that Hamas had toughened stances ahead of a possible resumption of negotiating the soldier's release, and demanded the opening of the Rafah crossing, as well as the additional release of Palestinian prisoners. (Ynetnews)

Israeli military bulldozers uprooted olive trees and destroyed agricultural land between the Salem military camp and Rummana village in the northern West Bank. The land had been confiscated on 12 August. (Ma'an News Agency)

It was reported that 373 additional names were added to the list of Palestinians to be granted family reunification permits in the West Bank. The initial list containing 5,000 names was released on 28 July 2008. (Ma'an News Agency)

15

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip landed near the town of Sderot in southern Israel, but caused no injuries or damage. (*Reuters*)

An Israeli police officer in the West Bank said that the police and the military preferred "to turn a blind eye" to incidents in which settlers attacked Palestinians in the West Bank. Security service and senior police and army officers had reported an increase in the number of violent incidents involving settlers. It was reported that a Shin Bet security service representative had stated that settler violence had been "intentional and planned". It was indicated that police officers had criticized the IDF for reportedly saying that they did not want to act against settlers. The West Bank precinct patrol unit stated that police also preferred not to confront settlers. (*Haaretz*)

The Israeli Defense Ministry decided to postpone the evacuation of the "Migron" settlement outpost, which it had informed the Israeli High Court of Justice it would evacuate by August 2008. Some 200 settlers were currently living on privately owned Palestinian land. The Ministry said that they could remain there until new homes were built for them on public land. (*AFP, The Jerusalem Post*)

16

The IDF arrested three Palestinians and beat a number of others, including local journalists, during an anti-wall demonstration in Dir Al-Ghusun, in the northern part of the West Bank. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF arrested two Palestinians at two different checkpoints near Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak met PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in Tel Aviv. An Israeli Defense Ministry statement said that Mr. Barak and Mr. Fayyad had discussed diplomatic and security issues including economic projects in the West Bank and the activities of the Palestinian security services. According to Palestinian media, Mr. Barak pledged that Israel would remove checkpoints, open key roads and grant more permits for Palestinians seeking work in Israel. A statement from Mr. Fayyad's office said the PA Prime Minister had insisted that Israel should have halted settlement construction and ceased military raids into the West Bank in pursuit of alleged Palestinian militants. Furthermore, the statement said that Mr. Fayyad also repeated Palestinian demands for the release of Marwan Barghouti. (*AFP, AP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Saeed Erakat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, said that he doubted that the recent Israeli proposal published in the Israeli media on reaching a peace settlement with the Palestinians was "serious". Mr. Erakat also said that "the reports are just trial balloons that Israel pops from time to time in order to lay the blame on the Palestinian side (for the failure of talks)". (*Xinhua*)

17

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit a field in the western Negev Desert without causing any damages or injuries. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

The IDF arrested three Palestinians in Asira, south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

An Israeli military court released on bail Jamal Amira, the father of the girl who documented the shooting of a blindfolded Palestinian man in Ni'lin. The judge said that the prosecution lacked evidence. (*Haaretz, Ynetnews*)

Israel authorities reopened Kerem Shalom, a commercial crossing into Gaza, as part of the ceasefire agreement with Hamas. The opening of the crossing could increase the inflow of food into the Gaza Strip, as its capacity is greater than the Sufa crossing, which was previously used. (*Xinhua*)

Prime Minister Olmert's Cabinet passed a proposal to release 150-220 Palestinian prisoners. A spokesperson for Mr. Olmert said that the release was a gesture of goodwill meant to show the Palestinians that they could win the release of prisoners through peaceful means. PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad welcomed the decision, but said that Israel should release even more of the Palestinian prisoners they hold. (*AFP, AP, www.btsalem.org, DPA, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

18

Representatives of five Palestinian factions agreed in a meeting in Gaza that a comprehensive national dialogue should begin in order to end the Palestinian internal political split. Leaders from Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian People's Party attended the meeting. The parties agreed in principle on forming a Government of national unity, holding new legislative and presidential elections on the basis of complete party representation and the restructuring of Palestinian security forces along professional lines, as well as to reactivate the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and the PLO. They also called for an immediate halt to media incitement campaigns and arbitrary detentions and for the release of all political detainees through forming a national committee with the participation of Fatah and Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Due to Israeli restrictions, Gaza had received less than 30 per cent of the cooking gas required for basic needs, according to Mahmoud Al-Khazindar, deputy of the Federation of Gas Station Owners in the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel allowed 10 truckloads of lumber into the Gaza Strip after Israeli authorities expanded the list of goods allowed to enter the territory. The deliveries of wood were the first in more than a year. (*Xinhua*)

Israel's ministerial committee overseeing the release of jailed Palestinians approved the Cabinet's list of about 200 prisoners to be set free in the West Bank. An Israeli official said that the prisoners would be released by 25 August. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was scheduled to meet with PA President Abbas on the same day. (*AFP, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

19

Israeli forces detained six Palestinians in Anata, east of Tulkarem, in the West Bank. Palestinian security forces said Israeli military vehicles and soldiers on foot stormed the town at dawn and forcibly entered and searched homes. (*Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua*)

Israeli forces arrested a Palestinian in Jenin during a raid. Palestinian security forces said troops entered under intense gunfire, ransacked houses before detaining Ahmad As'ad Zayed. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

B'Tselem, Yesh Din and The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, human rights organizations and Mr. Ahraf Abu-Rahma, the bound Palestinian protester who was shot by an Israeli soldier in Ni'lin, petitioned the Israeli High Court demanding that the court annul the original indictment for "unbecoming conduct" of the military personnel involved in the shooting. The petitioners demanded that both servicemen be tried instead for aggravated assault of a bound prisoner, an offence punishable by up to seven years in jail. (*AP, DPA, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews*)

PA President Abbas arrived in Saudi Arabia for meetings with King Abdullah, Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal. PA Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Khalil Ash-Shukaki told London-based *Al-Hayat* that President Abbas would discuss the situation in Gaza, negotiations with Israel, the Palestinian internal crisis and his initiative for national unity. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Egyptian mediators would start talks next week with Palestinian groups for the resumption of the Palestinian national dialogue, *MENA News Agency* reported. A source said that when all the bilateral talks were finished, Egypt would then issue an invitation for a comprehensive dialogue in Cairo. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

Israeli officials said that peace activists planning to land the SS Free Gaza and the SS Liberty on a beach in Gaza would be turned back by the Navy. Shlomo Dror, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said, "From my point of view this is some kind of pirate ship. You can demonstrate, that's okay with us, but you are not allowed to break international law." Several of the participants said they had received death threats. (*The Daily Telegraph*)

Mustafa Barghouti, a member of the PLC and Secretary-General of the Palestinian National Initiative, said that Israel had released 788 Palestinian prisoners since the Annapolis summit last year, and arrested some 3,700 Palestinians. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ninety-two prisoners, slated for release in late August, were due to be freed by the end of 2009, according to data from the Israeli prison service. Another 27 would be released in 2010, and 16 in 2011. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

B'Tselem, the human rights group, said that as of 30 July Israel held 8,472 Palestinian "security" prisoners in its jails. They included 5,176 Palestinian serving a sentence, 2,605 awaiting or undergoing trial, and another 691 Palestinians held in "administrative detention." Another 30 Palestinians were held in Israeli army detention facilities. (*DPA*)

A Palestinian, Ramada Ghalayini, died of cancer as he was prevented from leaving the Gaza Strip to get medical treatment, medical sources reported. The death toll of patients prevented from leaving Gaza reached 237. (*IMEMC*)

20

Israeli Defense Minister Barak ordered the closure of all crossing points to the Gaza Strip after Gaza militants fired a rocket into Israel, causing no damage. The attack came as Israel was planning to reopen the Kerem Shalom crossing to the Gaza Strip later in the week, officials said. Trials had been under way during the past two days to see how the reopened crossing would function in practice, and the previous day, some 55 truckloads of goods had entered southern Gaza via the crossing. Kerem Shalom was closed after a suicide bomb attack in April, for which Hamas claimed responsibility. (*IRIN*)

The Israeli army shut down three local radio stations in Hebron, arrested two workers, including *One FM* director Mohammad Qafisha, and confiscated the transmitting equipment. All three stations are now off the air. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli forces detained four Palestinians in Hebron after troops entered several homes. In a separate incident, Israeli soldiers stationed near the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron seized a Palestinian teenager allegedly in possession of a 10-cm knife. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli troops entered houses in the northern West Bank town of Qabatiya in a pre-dawn raid. Local sources said seven military vehicles arrived at 3 a.m., and soldiers ransacked houses, forcing sleeping residents into the street. No arrests were reported. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UN officials said that the volume of goods crossing into the Gaza Strip today was 46 per cent of that in May 2007. Pursuant to the ceasefire on 19 June 2008, Israel decided to expand the list of goods allowed into the Gaza Strip, but there was no explicit determination of what would be added to the list of allowed goods. The once-busy Al-Muntar (Kam) and Kerem Shalom crossings remained closed to trucks, leaving the Sufa crossing open, where traffic was capped at 90 trucks a day. Yair Moshe of the Kami transport company said that there was still a ban on products such as blankets, raw materials for industry, construction equipment like trowels and tiles, chocolate and chocolate spread, ground coconut, most nuts and seeds, and hygiene products like creams and gels. (*Haaretz*)

Palestinian unity talks were scheduled to start on 25 August in Egypt, according to the Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt Nabil Amr. Mr. Amr said Egyptian officials had contacted the leaders of the various Palestinian political factions, and they had begun to receive responses. Hamas officials confirmed that they had sent a document in response to the Egyptian inquiry, which included Hamas' suggestions on how the national dialogue should take place. Officials representing the independent Palestinian National Initiative and Hamas officials had met in the Gaza Strip a day earlier as part of the efforts to restore national unity. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The European Union provided an additional €40 million to the PA to help meet its recurrent expenditures and ensure the continued delivery of public services. The funds would be used to help pay for salaries and pensions, social allowances to vulnerable Palestinian families and fuel for the power plant to provide electricity for the Gaza Strip. Using part of the earlier pledged €440 million sum, the EU and the PA also launched a €37 million public infrastructure investment programme that would improve the delivery of services. All funds were channelled through the EU PEGASE mechanism. (<http://ec.europa.eu>)

Hamas spokesperson Abu Obeida warned that IDF soldier Gilad Shalit would face a fate as uncertain as that of Israeli airman Ron Arad, who had been missing since 1986, if Israel continued to stall negotiations for the prisoner exchange. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli authorities blocked the construction of a road in the West Bank village of Al-Walaja on the grounds that the land was claimed by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem. The road led to the oldest olive tree in the world, an international tourist attraction. Sa'id Abu Ali, representing Al-Walaja's agricultural charitable organizations, said that the village's municipal council wanted to improve the route to the olive tree. The project was funded by the Italian Government. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In his statement, Mr. Pascoe told the Council that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as part of the Annapolis process were continuing on both political and technical levels. He cautioned that the sides still seemed to differ on key issues. He reiterated the Secretary-General's call for the need to press ahead to make real progress in overcoming the differences to reach the goal of agreement by the end of the year, despite the political constraints. (*UN press release SC/9431*)

21

A Palestinian suffered serious wounds to the head when Israeli forces opened fire during a protest against Israel's separation wall in Ni'lin, medics and witnesses said. Clashes broke when demonstrators hurled rocks and Israeli security forces fired rubber-coated bullets and tear gas. (*AFP*)

Israeli military sources reported that soldiers had arrested an unnamed Palestinian who had infiltrated into Israel from the Gaza Strip. The same day, Israeli sources reported that 122 Palestinians who were in Israel illegally were transferred back into the Palestinian Territory. (*Haaretz, IMEMC*)

Israeli troops invaded the city of Jenin in the northern West Bank and the nearby Burkin village and arrested two persons. In Ni'lin village, two Palestinians, Said Amira, 22 years old, and Abdullah Abed Al Kareem, 17 years old, were detained. Israeli soldiers arrested a total of eight persons in Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm and Bethlehem. (*IMEMC*)

Extremist Israeli settlers damaged 20 graves in the Ma'man Allah cemetery, outside the Old City of Jerusalem, which is the oldest and largest in the region. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Seven Palestinian factions called for the immediate commencement of a comprehensive national dialogue to end the internal Palestinian crisis. The call came from a recent meeting of the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, Fatah, Fida, the Palestinian Arab Front, the Arab Liberation Front, the Palestine Liberation Front, the Palestinian National Initiative and the Popular Struggle Front. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni said that "time was against the moderates" looking to reach a peace agreement. Ms. Livni stated that "Now most Israelis understood that having two States in the lands comprising historic Palestine is an Israeli interest." She added that a Palestinian uprising could reignite if the international community piled too much pressure on the sides to paper over their differences and rush into an agreement on statehood. (*AFP, Haaretz*)

Jordan's Foreign Minister, Salah Bashir, summoned the Israeli ambassador to protest plans for excavation and construction work near the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. MP Mohammed Abu Hdeib, head of the committee on international affairs of the parliament's lower house, said after meeting Mr. Bashir, "Israel plans excavations near Al-Mughrabi Gate (of the compound) and wants to build a bridge there, violating the 1994 peace treaty with Jordan and international treaties". (*AFP*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Barak decided to reroute the separation fence in an area near Jerusalem, to ensure that the fence did not encroach on Palestinian land. The State Prosecutor notified the High Court of Justice of the Government's decision, which demanded that the fence near "Ma'aleh Adumim" be moved westward, to allow 4,000 dunums of Palestinian land to remain untouched. The decision was made in response to two petitions against the planned fence route. (*Haaretz*)

An IDF spokesman said that soldiers had been instructed to remove concrete blocks and a checkpoint at Bir Nabala near Ramallah in the West Bank. The move came ahead of a planned visit by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Tawfiq Nabali, the head of the Bir Nabala village council, said that the checkpoint had restricted the movement of more than 50,000 Palestinians living in 15 villages near Ramallah. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

22

Israel reopened its border crossings with the Gaza Strip, which had been closed on 20 August following a Qassam rocket attack. Israeli Defense Ministry official Peter Lerner indicated that trucks carrying fuel, livestock, stationery supplies for schools, food and medical supplies would enter through the Nahal Oz, Kerem Shalom and Sufa commercial crossings. (*Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters, Xinhua*)

Israeli soldiers prevented demonstrators in the village of Al-Ma'sarah, near Bethlehem, from reaching the land slated for confiscation for the construction of the separation wall and fired live ammunition and sound bombs. Two children were injured with shrapnel and dozens of persons suffered from tear gas inhalation. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Seven Palestinians from towns around Bethlehem were arrested by Israeli forces. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Benny Kashriel, mayor of "Ma'aleh Adumim", the largest Israeli settlement in the West Bank, said that he intended to appeal the decision of the High Court of Justice of Israel regarding the rerouting of part of the separation wall. (*BBC, Haaretz, IMEMC, Reuters, Xinhua*)

23

Israeli forces seized two activists affiliated with Hamas in the town of Al-Shawawra, east of Bethlehem. Also, Israeli forces arrested two Palestinians in the village of Al-Araqa, west of Jenin, and the nearby village of Misliya. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Palestinian officials said the PA would receive financial assistance from Saudi Arabia to help pay public sector salaries. PA Information Minister Riyadh al-Malki said that the Saudi Finance Minister had told the Palestinian Authority that the decision had been made to transfer \$100 million, adding that the money was part of pledges made to the PA at the Paris donors' conference in December and was expected to arrive in the coming days. (*Reuters*)

Two boats carrying 44 pro-Palestinian activists arrived in the Gaza Strip after Israel allowed them through, despite its tight blockade of the territory. The boats had set sail the day before from Cyprus carrying activists from 17 countries, including Israel, determined to draw attention to the blockade of Gaza. The boats sailed into Gaza City's main port, where they were greeted by thousands of people waving Palestinian flags, many of them motoring around the harbour in boats. The event was organized by the US-based Free Gaza Movement. (*AFP, AP*)

25

Israeli troops arrested 10 Palestinian civilians in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jenin, Tubas and Hebron. (IMEMC)

A Qassam rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel, landing in an open area of the Negev and causing no damage. (Haaretz)

The leaders of Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine confirmed their participation in Egyptian-sponsored Palestinian national unity talks in Cairo. The Democratic Front was to meet with Egyptian mediators on 27 August, and the Popular Front was to send its leaders to Egypt on 30 August. Fatah had not sent a delegation, and Hamas said it had never been invited formally to the negotiations. (Ma'an News Agency)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice acknowledged it would be difficult to reach a year-end target for an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, but said the two sides and the United States remained committed to that goal. Flying into the region on her seventh trip since the goal was set nine months ago at the Annapolis Conference, Secretary Rice said she would press the parties to secure even small, incremental steps and not dwell on producing documents that demonstrate partial progress. "I think it's extremely important just to keep making forward progress, rather than trying prematurely to come to some set of conclusions. ... We continue to have the same goal, which is to reach agreement by the end of the year. ... [There is] a lot of work ahead to do that and obviously it's a complicated time, but it's always complicated out here," she told reporters aboard her plane. Ms. Rice was to hold two days of talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials as well as bring them together for three-way talks intended to help them bridge remaining gaps. (AP)

The spokesperson for Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that the Minister had received a phone call from US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, currently visiting the region. They discussed the developments in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. (www.mfa.gov.eg)

Israel freed 198 jailed Palestinians in a goodwill gesture made hours before US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest peace mission to the region. Among the Palestinians freed was Said al-Atba, who served 31 years of a life sentence for masterminding a 1977 market bombing that killed a woman and wounded dozens of others in central Israel. Mr. al-Atba, 57, was the longest serving Palestinian inmate in Israel. The prisoners received a hero's welcome upon their return to the West Bank, where thousands of people joined celebrations at the Ramallah headquarters of PA President Mahmoud Abbas and elsewhere throughout the West Bank. "We will not rest until the prisoners are freed and the jails are empty," Mr. Abbas told the cheering crowd. (AP)

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories Richard Falk [said](#) that the landing of two wooden boats carrying 46 human rights activists in the Gaza Strip this past weekend was an important symbolic victory. This non-violent initiative of the Free Gaza Movement focused attention around the world on the stark reality that the 1.5 million residents of the Gaza Strip have endured a punitive siege for more than a year, a form of collective punishment that violated article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. (www.ohchr.org)

26

Israel closed its border crossings with the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

An Israeli military court sentenced the mayor of Jenin, 62-year-old Hatem Jarrar (Hamas), to six years in prison, an Army statement said. Mr. Jarrar had been convicted on 21 August for being a member of a "terrorist organization", the statement said. (AFP)

US Secretary of State Rice said that "God willing, with the good will of the parties, and the tireless work of the parties, we have a good chance of succeeding," and that there could still be a Mideast peace agreement before the end of President Bush's term in office. Ms. Rice also had a three-way meeting with the heads of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams, Ahmed Qureia and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. (AP, Ma'an News Agency)

Speaking alongside US Secretary of State Rice in Ramallah, PA President Abbas said that the PA leadership was not prepared to miss any opportunity and intended to exert every effort to resolve the conflict with Israel. He stressed that a comprehensive and not a partial solution was needed. (The Jerusalem Post)

In its semi-annual [report](#), Peace Now said that Israel was erasing the Green Line and continuing to build settlements. Over 1,000 new buildings were being constructed in the settlements containing approximately 2,600 housing units. Approximately 55 per cent of the new structures were located to the east of the separation wall. The Israeli Housing Ministry had initiated 433 new housing units during the period January to May 2008, compared to 240 during the same period in 2007. Construction initiated by the Ministry accounted for 64 per cent of all construction in the West Bank. The number of tenders in East Jerusalem had increased by a factor of 38 (1,761 housing units compared to 46 in 2007). (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, www.peacenow.org.il)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reiterated the US position that Israel should stop expanding settlements on Palestinian territory. She said, "Settlement activity is not conducive to creating an environment for negotiations, yet negotiations go on." Ms. Rice also said that settlement activity threatened to undermine the talks. PA President Abbas said that settlements "are undoubtedly a main obstacle in the road of the peace process." (AP, Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post, Ynetnews)

Israeli Defense Minister Barak met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Alexandria to discuss Egypt's efforts to broker a prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas. Mr. Barak said that Israel viewed Egypt as a central factor in the return of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. They also discussed the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and efforts by Egypt to curb arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip. Mr. Barak said that Egyptian authorities had cracked down on smuggling across the border, but that the measures were still not enough. *Israel Radio* said that, using high-tech equipment Egypt received from the United States, Egyptian security forces had recently discovered 140 smuggling tunnels under the borders with the Gaza Strip. These details were communicated to Mr. Barak during his meeting with Egyptian Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi and Intelligence Chief Omar Suleiman. (Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency)

27

Israel said that it would keep its crossings with the Gaza Strip closed for a second consecutive day in response to a rocket attack by Palestinian militants earlier this week. Israel's Defense Ministry would not say when the crossings into the Strip would be reopened. (AP)

King Abdullah II of Jordan and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France voiced support for a Palestinian statehood solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a joint communiqué issued after their talks held at the Elysée Palace, the two leaders stressed the importance of advancing the Middle East peace process towards an independent Palestinian State. They also reaffirmed the centrality of the role of the EU in Middle East peacemaking. (The Jordan Times, Xinhua)

Israel's National Broadcast Authority rejected radio advertisements criticizing the Israeli Government for stranding Palestinian university students in the Gaza Strip, a broadcasting official said, calling them too controversial. The group which submitted them, Gisha, was appealing the decision. The advertisements featured two prominent Israeli authors and a former cabinet minister calling on the Government to let the students out. According to Gisha's director Sari Bashi, around 1,000 students left Gaza to study abroad every year before the blockade, but today Israel allows out only several dozen who have scholarships at Western universities. The majority of the students who would study in Asia and the Middle East have not been allowed to leave, she said. (AP)

Efforts to resume inter-Palestinian dialogue were still in the early phases of coordinating the stances of the Palestinian groups, said former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. He also ruled out a speedy solution for the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. "I can't promise [that to] the Palestinian people, and we still call on Egypt to urgently open the crossing," he said. (Xinhua)

Hamas replaced hundreds of striking teachers in Gaza with its own supporters, purging Gaza's schools of political rivals. Labour strife had disrupted the public school system at the start of the academic year. The local teachers' union had called the strike to protest the transfers of teachers, saying Hamas had enforced the transfers to give its supporters key posts. (AP)

Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, who had sailed to the Gaza Strip with a group of pro-Palestinian activists, was still in Israeli police custody after being detained the previous day upon returning to Israel. Mr. Halper was being held in Ashkelon ahead of an appearance before a magistrate. (AFP)

PA President Abbas told reporters in Lebanon that he rejected the idea that Palestine refugees might be forced to stay in Lebanon permanently. He said all Palestinians should be given the right to return home. Mr. Abbas also said that he supported all decisions made by the Lebanese Government on how to deal with Palestinian militants outside the refugee camps. About 400,000 Palestinian refugees and their descendants live in 12 refugee camps throughout Lebanon. (Haaretz)

28

The IDF arrested 17 Palestinians in the West Bank in the last two days, including a Fatah activist who had been granted amnesty a day earlier. Israel had granted amnesty to some 60 activists. The arrest of Adham Labada of Fatah took place a day earlier, when undercover forces infiltrated Nablus. The other 16 Palestinians were taken from their homes in Hebron, Bethlehem, Qalqilya and Tulkarm. (Xinhua)

Israeli forces seized a Palestinian and raided the Al-Ehsan medical centre in Bethlehem. Security sources said the forces entered the city, surrounding the house of Ala Mohammad Hassan Breijiyah, detaining him and damaging his house. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

A group of Israeli settlers from "Bracha" set a construction workshop on fire in the village of Burin, south of Nablus. No casualties were reported. *(IMEMC)*
Israel opened the border crossings with the Gaza Strip after a two-day closure. Palestinians requiring medical treatment would be permitted to enter Israel via the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. Fuel, merchandise and humanitarian aid would be brought into the Gaza Strip via the Al-Muntar (Karni), Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings. *(DPA, Haaretz, Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)*

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh ordered the release of 153 Palestinian detainees as a goodwill gesture before the month of Ramadan. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

PA Minister of Interior and Civil Affairs Abdur Razzaq al Yahya and German Representative to the PA Klaus Burkhardt signed a joint agreement to establish 55 new police stations in the West Bank. The agreement was part of a joint project of the PA Interior Ministry, the EU mission to support the Palestinian police and the UN. Five of the new police stations would be in Jenin, where PA security forces had recently been deployed. The German Government had pledged €15 million (\$22 million) at a conference in Berlin in June. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Wataniya Palestine Telecom announced that it had signed an agreement with Ericsson to set up a second Palestinian mobile phone network. The company, now controlled by Qatar Telecom, Qtel, hoped to launch cellular service in 2009. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to suffer from drought, according to the head of the PA Water Authority Shaddad Attili. He said that crisis management was the only strategy he could apply. He was speaking at the World Water Week meeting in Stockholm. He added that he did not have the power to properly plan for the 3.5 million Palestinians, as the Oslo Accords left too much control in Israeli hands. He said, "We have to go to the Israelis to get permission to do projects, like drilling, building reservoirs or laying pipes. It is a very complex procedure." *(Ma'an News Agency)*

Two boats carrying international human rights advocates were scheduled to leave the Gaza Strip, bringing with them seven Palestinians who had been unable to leave due to the blockade. Nine international human rights advocates would remain in the Gaza Strip to perform longer-term monitoring. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

29

A 24-year-old Palestinian farmer was killed west of Jenin when he triggered an explosive device on his way to work in his fields, a Palestinian police official said.

The official said the device had been identified as an Israeli mine, adding that the Israeli army had used the area in the past as a training ground. *(AP)*

Israel arrested four Palestinian fishermen from the Gaza Strip when naval vessels intercepted their boats off the coast. According to an Israeli military spokesman, navy personnel stopped three fishing boats after they had floated beyond Gaza's territorial waters towards Israel, and the fishermen on board were taken for questioning in Israel. *(Reuters)*

Israeli soldiers forced their way onto the playing field of a Palestinian secondary school in the village of Tell, south of Nablus, and arrested a 19-year-old Palestinian. *(Ma'an News Agency)*

The World Bank transferred a further \$120.7 million to the PA to assist in providing education, health care and other vital social services for the Palestinian people.

The funds, contributed by the Governments of Canada, Kuwait, and the United Kingdom, represented the fourth tranche disbursed from the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan Trust Fund, administered by the World Bank. The total transfers had reached \$269 million. *(<http://go.worldbank.org/LSZO824O70>)*

An Israeli senior Government source said that Hamas had recently increased the number of Palestinian prisoners it wanted Israel to release in exchange for Gilad Shalit from 1,000 to 1,500, *Haaretz* reported. A ministerial committee headed by Vice Premier Haim Ramon was slated to discuss the deal on 31 August, and Mr. Olmert had asked it to draft a list of 450 prisoners that Israel would be willing to release in exchange for the soldier. This would be the first time that Israel had prepared such a list. *(Haaretz)*

30

In an interview, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said, "The presence of an Arab force in the [Occupied Palestinian] Territory could help stop violence and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." He said the idea warranted careful study and "deserves to be taken seriously." *(AFP, MENA)*

Egypt opened its Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip for the first time since May, allowing thousands to leave the Gaza Strip. The border opening was intended as a goodwill gesture ahead of Ramadan. Palestinian officials said that those leaving included Egyptian citizens, students, holders of foreign residency permits and patients in need of medical treatment abroad. *(AFP, Financial Times Ltd.)*

31

PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert met in Jerusalem. Mr. Olmert wanted the two sides to sign a document outlining agreement on some of the key issues or a so-called "shelf agreement" that would not be immediately implemented, according to officials of his office. Head of PLO Negotiations Department Saeb Erakat said, "We want an agreement to end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. President Abbas told Olmert that we will not be part of an interim or shelf agreement. Either we agree on all issues or no agreement at all." *(AP, Wafa)*

Israeli Government spokesperson Mark Regev said, "Both sides are interested in reaching a full agreement by the end of 2008 and believe it is possible. But since the question of Jerusalem is not solvable within this timeframe, they will have to agree to postpone an accord on this issue and agree on a mechanism and a timetable for Jerusalem." *(AFP)*
