

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

Monthly highlights

- PA President Abbas announces series of changes to Palestinian election laws. ([2 September](#))
- Quartet representative Tony Blair visits Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ([5, 6 September](#))
- PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert agree to set up negotiating teams ahead of the international conference. ([10 September](#))
- Israeli Security Cabinet votes to declare the Gaza Strip a "hostile," announcing its intention to impose additional sanctions on the territory. ([19 September](#))
- The Quartet Principals, together with Quartet representative Tony Blair, meet in New York. ([23 September](#))

1

Hamas gunmen opened fire on their own supporters, killing a teenager at a protest on the Gaza Strip-Egypt border, after the protesters had tried to rush the Rafah terminal and go to Egypt, hospital officials said. (AP)

Hamas authorities set bail at \$243 for the release of Fatah activists it had arrested following a Gaza City protest rally. Ibrahim Abu Naja, a Fatah official in the Gaza Strip, said that his group would not pay. "This is a serious precedent," he said. "The decisions adopted are illegal." (AP)

2

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired three rockets into southern Israel. The attack set off air-raid sirens in Sderot, but the rockets landed in open areas outside town, the IDF said. (AP)

Two members of the Islamic Jihad were lightly wounded near Khan Yunis in an IDF air strike, Palestinian medics said. (AFP)

King Abdullah II of Jordan held talks with visiting Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi. "King Abdullah II and Prodi stressed the importance of increased efforts by the European Union to support peace in the Middle East and bring back the Palestinians and the Israelis to the negotiations table," a Palace statement said.

"We are very positively engaged in the conference that will be held next November," Mr. Prodi told reporters. "I am sure that the Palestinian divisions will bring negative consequences to any future development in the area," he cautioned. (AFP)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana met Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas and other senior officials to prepare for the international conference later this year. "We must agree on the time of the conference, who will be at the conference and what the results of the conference will be," he said before the talks. President Abbas told a joint news conference in Ramallah with Mr. Solana that their talks had focused on the situation of Gaza Strip. He stated that there will be no dialogue with Hamas "unless it retreats from what was committed in June." (AFP, AP)

PA President Abbas announced a series of changes to Palestinian election laws. Palestinians would now vote solely for party lists, while district voting would be eliminated. The decree would also require all presidential and parliamentary candidates to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum rejected the changes and said: "Hamas objects to this policy of monopolizing decision-making and will not deal with its outcome." (AP)

The Foreign Press Association, which represents journalists in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, condemned the "flagrant abuse of journalists in Gaza last Friday by Hamas security forces." "We ask for the universally recognized freedoms of the press to be upheld, and demand an immediate end to the physical intimidation and beating of journalists covering events in Gaza," it said in a statement. (AFP)

3

A Palestinian rocket landed in a courtyard next to a day-care centre in Sderot. None of the 15 children at the centre were hurt. The IDF said seven rockets had been fired at Sderot. The Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility. Batya Katar, head of the Sderot Parents Association, said that parents were pulling all of the town's students out of school. (AP, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), Ha'aretz)

"We will not limit ourselves in regards to targeting the rocket launchers and those who dispatch them," Prime Minister Olmert said at a news conference in Jerusalem.

"The instruction given to the army is to destroy every Qassam rocket launcher and anyone who is involved in their launching against the residents of Israel."

"We are taking this new threat by Olmert seriously," Hamas spokesman Taher Nunu said. "We are warning of coming massacres against the people in Gaza."

Tzachi Hanegbi, Chairman of the Knesset's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee, said: "At some stage, decided by Israel, there will be no choice but to wage a campaign in the Gaza Strip." (AP, Reuters)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana condemned the launch of rocket fire at southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, during a joint news conference in Jerusalem with Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. Ms. Livni called the attacks "unbearable." "The Palestinians need to understand that business is not as usual," she said. Mr. Solana said that the international conference scheduled to be held in November "could not be allowed to fail." Ms. Livni said that the declaration of principles Israel and PA President Abbas were preparing ahead of the conference would "reflect the common ground" between the two sides. "I believe that there is common ground," she added. (DPA)

Prime Minister Olmert told reporters: "I have been holding meetings with Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen and I hope that in the near future this will lead to a ... joint declaration. ... If we can achieve a draft by November, we will achieve it, but I am not sure we will be able to do that." "A genuine project for peace

should be presented to this conference so it can serve as a basis for negotiations and reach towards a final settlement," PA President Abbas told reporters in Ramallah. Israel's Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz warned Mr. Olmert not to make "irreversible concessions" in the peace plan being discussed with the Palestinians, and demanded a debate in the Kadima party to set "red lines" before the conference. (*Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

Jordan's Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib and EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana discussed issues related to peacemaking efforts in the region. The two sides agreed to prepare well for the upcoming international conference on the Middle East peace scheduled before the end of the year. (*Petra*)

Imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti warned, in a statement released through his lawyer, that Hamas could orchestrate an armed takeover in the West Bank. "It would be a mistake if the Palestinian Authority does not take this possibility seriously, especially as the security services are so weak," he said. (*AFP*)

Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip called for a ban on holding Friday prayers in public, saying such prayers would be "religiously illegal." (*DPA*)

4

The IDF wounded four Palestinians, including three children, during an operation in Nablus, Palestinian hospital officials said. They said that soldiers had fired rubber bullets at a group of schoolchildren throwing rocks at them. Residents said that a Hamas leader was arrested by the troops. (*AP, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israel allowed more than 150 Palestinians to leave the Gaza Strip for Egypt via the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, PA and Israeli officials said. (*Ha'aretz*)

"We condemn the launching of rockets from Gaza and other places because these actions harm peace and the peace process," PA President Abbas said at a news conference. (*AP*)

Israel's Vice Premier Haim Ramon told *Israel Army Radio*: "We won't continue to supply oxygen [to Gaza] in the form of electricity, fuel and water when they are trying to kill our children." Israeli Government spokesman David Baker said that Mr. Ramon was voicing his own opinion. Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak ordered a review of the implications of temporarily cutting off the electricity supply to the Gaza Strip. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum accused Israel of utilizing the rocket attacks as a pretext, saying his movement did not fire as many rockets as the other factions. But he vowed to escalate the rocket attacks whenever Hamas found it necessary. (*Ha'aretz, Xinhua*)

"The elections won't be held unless the nation is united," PA President Abbas told a joint news conference in Ramallah with visiting Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer. We have not announced the date for elections but we have announced some amendments to the law on elections," he stated. (*DPA, Ma'an News Agency*)

Egypt's presidential spokesman Suleiman Awad told reporters, following President Mubarak's talks with Quartet envoy Tony Blair and Italy's Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema: "Preparations for the meeting in November need to be energized... There has to be a clear vision of tangible results ... which will achieve a breakthrough in dealing with the main issues and the final status issues... And if this meeting does not achieve a real breakthrough ... then the negative repercussions will touch everything in the region and will increase feelings of anger and frustration and everything that brings in the way of the rise of extremist forces in the region and outside." Mr. D'Alema said the conference would succeed "if principles are laid down to make the peace process succeed, and not just encouraging the parties to complete the peace process". (*Reuters*)

Quartet envoy Tony Blair will meet privately with Prime Minister Olmert later during the day, at the beginning of a 10-day visit to the region, during which he will meet with senior IDF officials, in order to understand the military's checkpoint policy, and tour the West Bank. He had also asked to receive intelligence briefings regarding the militant groups operating in the West Bank. He would meet senior PA and Fatah officials and public opinion experts. His visit would also include a visit to Jordan to meet with King Abdullah II and other senior officials. He was also to meet with Israeli and Palestinian private sector representatives in preparation for a joint Israeli-Palestinian business conference set for October in Tel Aviv, which he would be expected to attend. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Supreme Court ordered the State to redraw the route of its West Bank separation wall near the Palestinian village of Bil'in. "We were not convinced that it is necessary for security-military reasons to retain the current route that passes on Bil'in's lands," Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch wrote. (*AP*)

Israel intended to release from prison 100 Fatah members from the Gaza Strip, an Israeli Government source said. "The idea is to do it before Ramadan," said the source. Prime Minister Olmert's office declined to comment. (*Reuters*)

5

A Palestinian was shot dead in Gaza City. Hospital officials identified the victim as a member of the Hamas security force. Hamas later denied he belonged to the group. (*AP*)

An IDF soldier was moderately wounded and two were lightly wounded when a bomb was thrown at their military jeep in the West Bank city of Nablus. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades took responsibility. Dozens of jeeps had entered Nablus early in the morning, moving from house to house in the Balata refugee camp in search of militants. Eight Palestinians had been arrested overnight in IDF raids in the West Bank. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

IDF tanks and bulldozers moved into the northern Gaza Strip in what was reportedly a "limited routine operation" against rocket launchers. IDF ground troops destroyed four Qassam rocket launchers. There were no casualties reported. (*Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's Security Cabinet decided against a large-scale military response to repeated rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, but said that they would consider cutting off electricity or other vital supplies to the area if the attacks persisted. Mr. Olmert had convened the meeting to discuss the latest wave of rocket attacks on Sderot and the western Negev. Foreign Affairs Minister Tzipi Livni said, "I believe there is a range of steps Israel can take without creating a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, in order to send a message to Hamas and the rest of the terror groups." Defence Minister Barak asked legal experts to look into the plan of cutting off utilities in the Gaza Strip. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana told reporters in Cairo that the EU would not leave the Palestinian people caught in the Gaza Strip to starve. Mr. Solana was on a two-day visit to Egypt. He said that the EU had given the Gaza Strip US\$ 70 million in monetary aid, in addition to food and fuel, thus effectively helping around 600,000 Palestinians. (*DPA*)

Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, said that the Middle East peace conference proposed by US President Bush should not be a showcase nor favour Israel in pursuing a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Speaking to a meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers in Cairo, he said that it was "imperative that the gathering should not be meaningless and a useless political demonstration." The meeting in Cairo was held to work out a united Arab stand toward the conference, expected to be held in Washington in November. (*AP*)

The US State Department announced the appointment of retired Ambassador Don Bandler to serve as Quartet representative Tony Blair's Head of Mission in Jerusalem. Mr. Bandler, a former US Ambassador to Cyprus, accompanied Mr. Blair on his current trip to the region. (www.state.gov)

"We will leave no stone unturned," International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Director-General Angelo Gnaedinger told reporters after discussing the issue of captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. "We will keep pressing [Hamas] to see him," he said. (*Reuters*)

The European Union contributed €21 million, through the Temporary International Mechanism to this month's payment to public service providers and pensioners by the PA Government. (ec.europa.eu)

6

Three Palestinians were killed and 10 injured in an Israeli incursion in south east Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian medical sources named the dead as: Muhammad Al-Abadlah, 30, of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, Ghassan Saqqa, 24, and Muhammad Khattab Abu Libda, age unknown, of the Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad. More than 13 Israeli tanks, along with bulldozers, had entered the Al-Qarara area of Khan Yunis through the Kissufim crossing and began firing on agricultural lands and houses under cover of helicopter fire and aerial reconnaissance, eyewitnesses reported. The IDF and members of the Special Forces also raided homes, searched and destroyed their contents, but made no arrests. Armed clashes then ensued between the IDF and Palestinian militants who fired mortars and rocket-propelled grenades at the Israeli tanks. A Palestinian spokesman said that there had also been an Israeli incursion a hundred metres from the Sufa crossing, south of Rafah, as well as a limited incursion into Beit Hanoun, in the north of the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Two Palestinian children were seriously wounded in Jenin when the IDF besieged a group of Saraya Al-Quds militants in a building east of the city. The children were evacuated to Israeli hospitals. The Israeli forces arrested Ahmad Salah, a leader of the militants. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF denied reports that Palestinian fighters had infiltrated into Israel through a fence on the Gaza Strip-Israel border and attacked an IDF post. Palestinian militants had said that their fighters, who were in a jeep and a pickup truck, broke through the barrier and fierce clashes with troops ensued. Israeli aircraft struck two cars in the area around the time the militants said the clashes erupted. The Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack. (*AP*)

The IDF killed six Palestinian militants as they were preparing to launch an attack against an army post on the Gaza Strip border. A joint statement from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Al-Quds Brigades said that they lost "six martyred fighters." A total of 10 Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire during the day. (AFP)

Israeli border police arrested 50 Palestinian workers without Israeli work permits in the city of Jaffa in Israel. The workers claimed that they had been beaten before they were taken to appear before Israeli courts. The penalty for working without a correct permit in Israel is usually a fine or a jail sentence. (Ma'an News Agency)

Omar Masalma, 23, from the village of Beit Awa, south of Hebron, died in his prison cell in the Ma'asiyahu prison on 25 August due to medical negligence, according to a statement from his family released today. Mr. Masalma banged on his cell door for a long time on the night he died, seeking help, according to his cellmates. He had been complaining of severe stomach pains. The Israeli Prison Service denied the allegations of medical negligence or maltreatment. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF arrested Suhayla Jabir, the wife of Umar Jabir, 46, who was "wanted" by Israel, along with Mr. Jabir's nephew and two neighbours in the Iktaba neighbourhood of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank. Mr. Jabir is affiliated with the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak told his senior staff that the IDF was moving closer to an extensive ground action in the Gaza Strip "in order to halt the rocket fire and the strengthening [of militant organizations]." The statement came a few hours after the Security Cabinet decided not to significantly alter the IDF's actions in the Gaza Strip. Sources said that Israel's position could change if a large number of casualties resulted from Qassam fire from the Gaza Strip. Mr. Barak added, "The solution is offensive actions deep in the territory based on intelligence." (Ha'aretz)

Quartet representative Tony Blair visited the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem before he was due to meet PA President Abbas in Ramallah. Mr. Blair met the Bethlehem Governor, Salah Tamari, who updated him on the daily hardships endured by the citizens of Bethlehem under the occupation. (Ma'an News Agency)

Osama Al-Mazini, a senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip in charge of prisoners' affairs, denied a Ha'aretz report that the organization had received a new Israeli offer aimed at securing the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. (Ha'aretz)

Norway's embassy in Tel Aviv had urged the Norwegian Government to criticize Israel for the use of torture in prisons, Norway's State radio network NRK reported. The network said that it had obtained a secret diplomatic document from the embassy urging action and expressing concern that torture was still practiced in Israel.

The concern stemmed from a report by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, an Israeli human rights group, claiming that prisoners were sometimes beaten during interrogations, held in painfully tight handcuffs and suffered isolation, threats, humiliation and sleep deprivation. (Ha'aretz)

The Emirates Charitable Committee, in cooperation with the World Food Programme, donated more than 30 tons of school supplies to the Gaza Strip. (International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC))

The Israeli human rights group, the Civil Rights Society, had sent an urgent message to Prime Minister Olmert warning of the consequences of enforcing collective punishment of the residents of the Gaza Strip, after Israeli media reports that the Israeli Government intended to cut off power and water supplies to the area. (IMEMC)

7

Tarazan Doghmush, a former member of the PA security force, was found dead in the Gaza Strip, according to medical sources. A Fatah official charged Hamas with killing him. His brother was in intensive care at a Gaza Strip hospital. No further information was immediately available about what had happened to the two of them. Hamas official Naser Khalifa denied that his group was responsible. (DPA, Ha'aretz)

At least 40 people were injured in clashes between Hamas security personnel and Fatah supporters, as tens of thousands took to the streets throughout the Gaza Strip, heeding Fatah calls to hold Friday prayers outdoors despite a Hamas ban. Hamas security forces, armed with rifles and clubs, beat Fatah supporters protesting Hamas' rule in the Gaza Strip, according to witnesses. An explosive device thrown into the middle of one protest rally injured four people. Hamas men also accosted at least seven journalists and arrested two. (AP, DPA, Ha'aretz)

Hamas arrested at least four top Fatah officials as they took part in the protests in the Gaza Strip. They included Fatah Secretary-General in Gaza, Zakaria Adha, Fatah legislator Ahmed Nasser, Ibrahim Abu Maja, the first deputy speaker of the previous Palestinian Legislative Council, and Jamila Saydam, one of Fatah's women leaders and former legislator. (DPA)

In Ramallah, some 750 Fatah supporters gathered with PA President Abbas for prayers to demonstrate solidarity with Fatah in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Abbas appealed for calm. Thousands of Palestinians gathered at similar prayer rallies in the West Bank. (AP)

Israeli sources said that a Palestinian woman from Al Ezariah gave birth at the checkpoint near Abu Dis, just north of Bethlehem. An Israeli border policeman prevented the woman from passing through the checkpoint on her way to a hospital in Jerusalem, leaving her to give birth on the street. She was attended to by border police under the directions of an Israeli physician by telephone. The woman and the baby were later transferred to the hospital in Jerusalem. (IMEMC)

Some 1,500 activists arrived at the West Bank village of Bil'in for a rally celebrating the High Court's decision to order the Israeli Government to change the wall's route in the area. PA officials, including Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and several ministers, participated in the demonstration. (Ynetnews)

8

A Palestinian ambulance was reportedly struck by an Israeli military vehicle at the At-Tur area, south of Nablus. According to the ambulance driver, the Israeli military vehicle "obstructed the ambulance several times, deliberately hitting it while the ambulance was waiting to evacuate any possible injuries, as the Israeli forces were operating in the area." Earlier, more than 12 Israeli military vehicles entered the area and searched two homes. (Ma'an News Agency)

9

A Qassam rocket struck an open area near a kibbutz in the south of Israel. There were no injuries or damage in the attack and no immediate claim of responsibility. (Ha'aretz)

The IDF said that it had detained a Palestinian youth armed with three explosive devices who was being held at a military checkpoint near Nablus. Israel Army Radio said that the devices had been intended for use in a suicide bombing inside Israel. Meanwhile, Palestinian security sources said that a member of the Islamic Jihad was detained by an Israeli unit in the Bethlehem area. They identified him as Yasser Darawi, 32, and said that he was seized after Israeli troops surrounded his house. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Defying Hamas, scores of schools and shops shut their doors, observing a PLO-called strike to protest violence by Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. Hamas dismissed the action, which was the first general strike in the Gaza Strip since it took control nearly three months earlier. In the Gaza Strip's largest market, all but a handful of fruit and vegetable vendors were closed. Gaza City municipal employees also stayed home. The universities of Al-Azhar, Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa were closed, as were the majority of State schools. Schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remained open. (AFP)

King Abdullah II of Jordan told Quartet representative Tony Blair in Amman that final status issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be a top priority at the US-sponsored peace conference later this year. The King said that his country "supports all efforts by the Quartet to bring closer the points of view between the Palestinians and Israelis ahead of the peace meeting..." (AFP)

Ynet reported that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Palestinian Authority were launching a placement project to provide professional training for Palestinian terror suspects recently pardoned by Israel. In a document sent by PA Interior Minister Abed al-Razaq al-Yahiya to regional governors in the West Bank, he instructed them to establish groups to work with teams of professionals from UNDP, which was developing the programme in conjunction with the International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution. (Ynetnews)

10

A Palestinian youth who was shot in the head during an IDF operation in Jenin on 7 September died of his wounds in Rambam Hospital in Haifa. Wadee Samara, 16, was hit by a rubber-coated bullet during clashes between IDF troops and locals who were throwing rocks at them. (Ha'aretz)

Two mortar shells landed in the western Negev. No injuries were reported. (Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces arrested four Palestinians in Nablus and two others in Tulkarm. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli forces entered the Jenin refugee camp and Qabatiya village, in the northern West Bank, and were confronted by Palestinian fighters. The troops stormed several homes in the area with more than 40 military vehicles. The Israeli forces had been searching for "wanted" Palestinians. (Ma'an News Agency)

The PA security services seized 12 Hamas supporters from around the West Bank, according to a Hamas statement. Among those arrested were the mayor of the village of Aqqaba, Sheikh Mustafa Abu Arrah, and the former president of the Student Council at An-Naja University in Nablus. (Ma'an News Agency)

Members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades shut down the office of the Palestinian Prisoners' Association in Nablus. The Brigades said that they were acting in protest of what they saw as "negligence and inconvenience" in the organization's services for Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails. (Ma'an News Agency)

Former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh ordered an investigation into alleged assaults on journalists by the Executive Forces during open-air prayers in Gaza City

on 7 September. Mr. Haniyeh expressed concern over the "media blackout policy" which only focused on the negative aspects of the situation in the Gaza Strip. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

PA President Abbas' popularity had increased since Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian leader would easily win a re-election if a vote were held today, according to a poll. The poll found that 73 per cent of Palestinians opposed the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip. The poll, which was conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, an independent think tank in Ramallah, questioned 1,270 Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem between 6 and 8 September. The survey had a margin of error of 3 percentage points. According to the poll, 31 per cent supported Hamas, while 48 per cent support Fatah. If presidential elections were held today, Mr. Abbas would win 59 per cent, compared to 36 per cent for Hamas' former Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh. However, 38 per cent said that they would not vote if new elections were held. (*AP*)

UNRWA had expressed optimism over initial donor pledges following an appeal for \$55 million to fund the first year of rehabilitation and emergency aid to Palestinians displaced from the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon. "The reaction has been very positive from donors, some of whom have made immediate pledges," UNRWA spokesperson Hoda Al-Turk said. UNRWA would provide temporary shelter, assist in rent payment by refugees, provide prefabricated homes and support host families and provide health care and education for the coming year, according to its Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd. (*AP, www.irinnews.org*)

During the meeting with PA President Abbas in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert offered to recommend the release of Palestinian prisoners before Ramadan. The leaders also agreed to set up negotiating teams to work on some of the key issues that would have to be resolved as part of a peace agreement, Israeli Government official Jacob Galanti said. The three-hour meeting was the latest in a series of talks aimed at reaching a declaration of principles in advance of the international conference in November. Mr. Galanti also said that Israeli officials would decide next week on the lifting of roadblocks and other travel restrictions in the West Bank. Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat said that President Abbas had asked Israel to remove 16 major West Bank checkpoints. He expected the prisoner release to take place during the first week of Ramadan. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hamas officials said that they planned to appoint new judges in Gaza to replace those refusing to cooperate with the group. After Hamas' takeover of Gaza, PA President Abbas had ordered the police and prosecutors not to cooperate with Hamas, which had brought the court system to a halt. The Hamas Government had since appointed 28 prosecutors, but the judges refused to deal with them, said Ismail Jaber, the Hamas-backed deputy prosecutor general in Gaza, adding that the upcoming appointment of judges was "a necessary step because of the pressing need." (*AP*)

PA President Abbas met in Ramallah with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, who had started his first major Middle East tour as Foreign Minister. Mr. Abbas told reporters after the meeting: "We have spoken of the international conference and the need for the presence of concerned parties in the region as well as international parties which work for peace ... especially France." "France is ready to take part, to be active in it and to make proposals. ... We were pleased to hear that preparations for this conference in November, to take place, it seems, in the United States, are going ahead in a positive way," Mr. Kouchner said. He was also due to meet with leaders in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon during his tour. (*AFP*)

11

A Qassam rocket attack on an Israeli army unit based in the Negev region wounded 69 soldiers. One soldier was critically wounded, 4 others were seriously hurt and another 10 were moderately wounded. The remainder were slightly hurt, many of them suffering mainly from shock. The attack was carried out by Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committee. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that Hamas bore ultimate responsibility for the strike, adding that Israel would use non-military means to respond to ongoing rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip, a possible reference to proposals to curb the supply of utilities to the population of Gaza. (*Ha'aretz*)

A Palestinian and three of his children were wounded in the northern Gaza Strip when a shell fired by an Israeli tank hit their house in Beit Hanoun, following the rocket attack that injured scores of Israeli soldiers, according to medics. An Israeli army spokesman could not immediately confirm a strike in Beit Hanoun, but said that the military had carried out a ground strike in the northern Gaza Strip from where the Qassam attack on the army base had been launched. (*AFP*)

A Palestinian woman and her daughter were wounded by Israeli artillery fire in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources reported. The IDF confirmed a strike in the area aimed at thwarting rocket attacks. (*Ynetnews*)

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinians in the Al Ein refugee camp in Nablus. The forces blasted through walls between Palestinian homes to ease their passage during the raid. Two elderly Palestinians were injured when a wall collapsed over them. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Seven Palestinians, including children, were injured during clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The *Ma'an News Agency* reported that it had received from an Israeli source a copy of the eight points being crystallized as a declaration of principles between Israel and the PLO before the summit expected to be held in November in Washington. The following are extracts:

1. Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank in a given period of time.
2. An unarmed Palestinian State within the 1967 borders.
3. There will be two capitals in Jerusalem.
4. Special arrangements will be prepared to secure access to Holy places for all religions.
5. Palestine to be declared a national homeland for the Palestinian people and Israel to be declared a national homeland for the Jewish people.
6. A just solution to be agreed on for the problem of the Palestinian refugees with recognition of their suffering and understanding of their individual rights within the framework of a comprehensive solution.
7. Both sides to declare the end of conflict and endeavour to gain public support as much as possible.
8. Both sides to consider this agreement as being in accordance with the principles of the peace initiative proposed by the Arab League.

(*Ma'an News Agency*)

Ha'aretz reported that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's office had requested a copy of a 1995 paper formulated during secret meetings between Yossi Beilin and Mahmoud Abbas. The document addressed a possible framework for the permanent settlement of the conflict. Officials asked Mr. Beilin for a copy, possibly because Mr. Olmert and his aides wanted to learn about the issues on which Mr. Abbas had expressed agreement in the past and make use of that knowledge in the current effort, the newspaper said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak said at a meeting with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner: "We'll announce that every Qassam is an hour of blackout.

That way, whoever launches the Qassam knows he's cutting the power. We can't keep going at a rate of 90 Qassams." (*Ha'aretz*)

"Russia is very much concerned about the new outbreak of armed confrontation," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement following the Qassam rocket attack on an IDF base. Moscow "is particularly concerned over the fact that the recent incident occurred several hours after the Jerusalem meeting between Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who discussed normalization and long-term settlement," the Ministry said. (*ITAR-TASS*)

12

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired seven Qassam rockets at the western Negev. There were no injuries and no significant damage in the attacks, although the rockets caused several brush fires. (*Ynetnews*)

The military wing of Hamas shelled the Sufa commercial crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. (*Xinhua*)

A number of IDF military vehicles launched an incursion into the Gaza Strip, east of the Maghazi refugee camp. Israeli bulldozers destroyed a home, three greenhouses and three poultry farms. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli Army arrested 19 Palestinians in the West Bank, PA security sources and witnesses said. The sources said that a senior Islamic Jihad leader was arrested in Tubas. The IDF also raided the Balata refugee camp near Nablus, arresting four people, including a woman. Fourteen Palestinians were detained in Hebron. (*Xinhua*)

A weapons arsenal belonging to Hamas was discovered inside a mosque in Nablus, PA security sources said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The Israeli authorities imposed a closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The closure would be lifted after security

assessments, the IDF said. (*Ma'an News Agency, The Jerusalem Post*)

Israeli security services last week thwarted a suicide bombing that was to take place in Beersheba, Israeli security sources said. A Palestinian from the Gaza Strip, armed with an explosives belt, had been able to infiltrate into Israel through the border with Egypt. He was captured by the Israeli Border Police and told investigators that he had been dispatched by the Popular Resistance Committees. (*Ha'aretz*)

"They [the Palestinians] want a tight and strict schedule for implementation [of agreements reached at the international conference]. Naturally we can't commit to a tight and strict schedule," an Israeli Government official said. An Israeli Foreign Ministry official said that Israel wanted any timetables to be "performance-based."

"A timeline that ignores performance is not effective, and when you don't meet a specific target date it can only create more problems and frustration," the official said. (*Ha'aretz*)

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal told reporters that the US-sponsored conference "would be pointless unless it addressed key Middle East issues and set a timetable to implement any deal." "If these matters are not addressed by the meeting, I doubt the Kingdom will participate," he said. (*AFP, Xinhua*)

"A Palestinian State should be created in the coming weeks," French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in Jerusalem, after meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. "I seriously felt that something is happening between Israelis and Palestinians," he said. The Foreign Minister later continued to Amman to have discussions with his Jordanian counterpart, before meeting with King Abdullah II. (*AFP, DPA*)

US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said during a daily press briefing: "Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will travel to Israel and the Palestinian territories from 18 to 20 September. The Secretary will visit Jerusalem and Ramallah for meetings with officials from Israel and the Palestinian Authority in order to continue discussions on advancing the development of a political horizon and the two-State solution." He would not rule out the possibility that Ms. Rice would bring Mr. Olmert and Mr. Abbas together for a three-way meeting. (*AP, www.state.gov*)

Quartet representative Tony Blair said, after touring a PA police training facility in Jericho, that it was critical to expand the capabilities of the Palestinian security forces. (*Reuters*)

13

Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a car in the Jabalya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, injuring two members of Islamic Jihad. The IDF issued a statement confirming that the Israel Air Force had hit a group of militants who had been preparing to fire rockets at Israel. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

Israeli forces arrested three Palestinians in Hebron. (*IMEMC*)

Five "wanted" Palestinians were arrested in a number of operations across the West Bank. One of the men was from Jenin while the other four were from Al-Khadr, south of Bethlehem. In Nablus, Israeli forces came under gunfire in two separate attacks. There were no reports of any injuries. In another operation, the Israeli army reported that they had entered the town of Birqa, northwest of Nablus. Soldiers arrested a Palestinian youth, allegedly holding a Molotov cocktail. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Hamas called on Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip to stop firing rockets and mortar bombs at border crossings with Israel used to bring food and other supplies into the territory. A Hamas spokesman said that the rocket and mortar attacks should be stopped to "preserve the interest of the Palestinian people," especially during Ramadan. Militant groups said that they would consider the request but had no intention of stopping rocket fire into Israel during the holy month. At least two makeshift rockets were fired at Israel early in the morning, but no damage or injuries were reported, the Israeli army said. (*Reuters*)

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said that the issue of an international Middle East peace conference should be tackled with caution in order to be effective, especially after the disappointments of earlier conferences. "We should play an efficient role for realizing a comprehensive, fair peace in the region," he said during a joint press conference with Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa. Mr. Moussa said that, so far, the Arab side had not been informed of any preparations for the conference, which raised "question marks about the goals of the conference and its agenda." In another joint press conference with Mr. Kouchner in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that communications between Egypt, the US and other international parties did not reveal the vision of the US regarding the conference. "Holding this conference ... without agreeing on establishing a Palestinian State will lead to serious consequences," Mr. Aboul-Gheit said. (*Ha'aretz*)

14

Two Israeli civilians were lightly wounded in a drive-by shooting attack in the northern West Bank. Palestinians opened fire at the car travelling between the settlements of "Kamei Shomron" and "Kedumim." The IDF sent troops to search for the perpetrators of the shooting, and checkpoints were set up in an attempt to stop them. (*Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Ynetnews*)

At dawn, IDF soldiers entered the southern Gaza Strip, an army spokesperson and local residents said. Palestinians also reported the presence of troops in the north of the Strip, but the IDF did not confirm the report. The IDF confirmed military activity by a small force against "terror threats." Eyewitnesses said that they saw tanks, armed personnel carriers and soldiers entering the Gaza Strip. (*BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli aircraft struck a car carrying Palestinians north of Gaza City, injuring no one. According to Abu Hanza, a spokesman for Islamic Jihad, the car was hit by a missile and was carrying a field commander of the group. The two passengers escaped unharmed, he said. The Israeli army confirmed that it had launched an air strike targeting rocket launchers. (*AP*)

Hundreds of Palestinians thronged two major West Bank checkpoints, trying to reach Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque on the first Friday of Ramadan despite tight Israeli restrictions. Only men above the age of 45 and women above the age of 35, who had also obtained special permits, were allowed to enter the Mosque, according to a police spokesperson. Hundreds of Israeli police had been deployed in streets and alleys in and around Jerusalem's walled Old City where the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound is located. Some 90,000 worshippers arrived at the Mosque. (*AP, Ha'aretz, Ynetnews*)

PA President Abbas expressed concern about the ambiguity surrounding plans for the planned international peace summit in November. He said that so far everything was unclear about the meeting, "which is called sometimes a meeting and sometimes ... a conference. ... Most importantly, we do not know the content of the meeting and the expected results if there will be [any]." Earlier in Jordan, Mr. Abbas denied news reports that an eight-point declaration of principles emerged from his 10 September meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. "We only discussed the formation of a joint committee to deal with all the significant issues which we need to agree on at this stage," he said. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

A Kuwaiti newspaper, *Al-Jareeda*, reported that Hamas was coming under pressure from all sides and that there were no communications between the two wings of Hamas – those in the Gaza Strip and those in exile. Both the Saudi and Egyptian Governments had reportedly refused a proposed visit by Khaled Mashaal, Hamas Political Bureau Chief, explaining that the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip had first to be reversed before he would be allowed to enter their countries. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

15

Israeli tanks crossed into the northern Gaza Strip in an operation to destroy rocket launchers. Palestinian health officials said that a 17-year-old, whom residents said was not known as a militant, had been seriously injured in a gunfire exchange in Beit Hanoun. The army said the tanks had responded with gunfire after they had been shot at, including with rocket-propelled grenades. Islamic Jihad said that it had fired two rocket-propelled grenades at the troops. The soldiers detained nine Palestinians for questioning, the army said. (*AP*)

The National Resistance Brigades, loyal to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades, the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the Kerem Shalom crossing. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told *Israel Army Radio* that the Government was considering several kinds of retaliation, not just military, in an apparent reference to recent calls for Israel to cut off the supply of electricity, fuel and water to the Gaza Strip in an effort to get the Hamas rulers there to stop rocket fire. (*AP*)

Israeli officials said that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had delayed a plan to release a number of Fatah members from prison, expected to be around 100. Officials said that Mr. Olmert had planned to ask the Cabinet on 16 September to release more prisoners as a goodwill gesture for the Ramadan fasting month, but the item had been removed from the agenda amid fears that it would not garner enough support. One Government official said that the vote had been delayed because a list of prisoners had not been agreed upon.

16

Israeli artillery fire killed two Palestinians in separate incidents in the West Bank. Youssef al-Hafi, 21, was killed in the Balata refugee camp, near Nablus, Palestinian security sources said. He belonged to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Another Palestinian was killed near Hebron after an army patrol arrived at a spot where two

rival clans had earlier exchanged gunfire, medics and the army said. Palestinians on the scene hurled rocks at the soldiers, who opened fire, killing one of the men. An army spokesman said that the troops had opened fire at an armed Palestinian. (AFP)

Israeli forces conducted an incursion into the area of Al-Umur, east of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. Witnesses said that more than 10 tanks and several bulldozers entered the area amid intense gunfire, backed by Israeli fighter jets. The forces stormed Palestinian homes and seized residents. Israeli helicopters launched at least one missile at a mosque, causing severe damage. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades claimed responsibility for launching two home-made rockets at the Israeli town of Yad Mordechai, north of Gaza. Also, the National Resistance Brigades, affiliated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, claimed responsibility for launching two home-made rockets at the Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossing between the northern Gaza Strip and Israel. (Ma'an News Agency)

A small explosion at the headquarters of Hamas-run security forces in Gaza City wounded at least four people, witnesses said. The blast came just hours after Hamas' police force said it had found and defused a 15-kg bomb placed near the Palestinian parliament building in the Gaza Strip. (AFP)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert indicated that there would be no major breakthroughs in peacemaking ahead of a US-sponsored peace conference in the third quarter of the year, prompting a Palestinian threat to skip the gathering. At a meeting of his Kadima Party, Mr. Olmert dismissed recent reports that he and PA President Abbas had agreed on binding principles to guide peace talks, officials said. Instead, Mr. Olmert said that he and the Palestinian leader would go no further than a non-binding declaration of intent. "There is a difference between an agreement on principles and a declaration of intent," a participant in the meeting cited Mr. Olmert as saying. "If Olmert says there'll just be a declaration, it's not worth going to this meeting," said Nimr Hamad, an adviser to Mr. Abbas. (AP)

17

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian near the Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossing in the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency, Xinhua)

Israeli troops shot to death a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in Ramallah. Palestinian security officials said that Mohammed Jabbarin had been unarmed and shot after he hurled rocks at patrolling troops. The Israeli army said troops operating in Ramallah had shot an armed man laying a roadside bomb aimed at Israeli soldiers, and that an explosive device was found at the scene. (AP)

Israeli forces arrested 14 Palestinians in Ramallah, Qalqilya, Hebron and Jenin. (Ma'an News Agency)

Doctors in the Gaza Strip suspended a month-old slowdown until the end of Ramadan in mid-October. Hospital doctors had launched the slowdown in August after Hamas rulers arrested a prominent physician allied with Fatah. On orders from Mr. Abbas' Government, which had been paying their salaries, most doctors had shortened their daytime hospital schedule to three hours a day, receiving patients afterward in expensive private clinics, though emergency services operated throughout the day. Hamas later shut down more than 25 of the private clinics, putting Gaza patients at the mercy of the rivalry between the two factions. The chairman of the doctors' union in Gaza, former Health Minister Zehmi Wahidi of Fatah, said that with Israel retaliating against militant fire from Gaza, doctors had decided to suspend the slowdown "as a goodwill gesture for the holy month of Ramadan." (AP)

The British Government, in a report entitled "Economic aspects of peace in the Middle East," said that the outlook for the Palestinian economy was already bleak and, with its population growing rapidly, the situation was unsustainable. The report recommended the immediate removal of obstacles to travel within the West Bank and recommended the operation of continuous and predictable border crossings for goods and people into and out of Gaza. The report had been commissioned by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in 2005, when he was Finance Minister. He had long argued that the political and security situation could only improve if there was a strong and sustainable Palestinian economy. The report concluded that the private sector must grow in the territories for there to be any chance of keeping unemployment from rising above already "unacceptably high" levels, and that a stable relationship was needed between the Palestinian and Israeli economies. (Reuters)

18

A teenage Palestinian militant was killed when the Israeli army began a widespread operation in Nablus. Israeli Staff Sgt. Ben-Zion Henman was also killed in the gunbattle. Mohammed Khaled, 17, a member of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was killed by IDF soldiers, who said that Mr. Khaled was responsible for killing Mr. Henman. During the operation, electricity was cut off, leaving the 5,000 residents without power. Some families also reported having no water. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

Israeli forces moved into Qabatiya, east of Jenin, and set up several military posts in the western and eastern neighbourhoods. (Ma'an News Agency)

IDF troops arrested seven Palestinians in separate West Bank operations. (Ha'aretz)

The World Bank issued a 35-page report entitled "Two Years after London: Restarting Palestinian Economic Recovery", to be presented at the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee conference of donors to the PA, to be held in New York on 24 September. The report indicated that: "Per capita GDP in the Palestinian Territory [now stands] at \$1,129, about a third less than its level ... in 1999 ... GDP is being increasingly driven by Government and private consumption from remittances and donor aid, while investment has fallen to exceedingly low levels, leaving little production base for a self-sustaining economy". The report also showed that "With few options at its disposal, and despite an unsustainable wage bill, the PA has resorted to absorbing workers as a way to alleviate poverty ... as a result ... the public sector has expanded, [but] the economy's productive capability has begun to hollow out, making it increasingly donor dependant". The World Bank warned that no viable economic and diplomatic plan could sideline Gaza. "Any discussion on economic recovery and the prospects for peace is incomplete without the Gaza Strip ... Gaza represents about 40 per cent of the population, and a quintessential part of the Palestinian territory, economy and identity ... The Gaza Strip has been hardest hit, with more than 35 per cent of the nearly 1.5 million Palestinians living in deep poverty, and more than one in three Gazans (also 35 per cent) have no job". (AFP, AP, DPA)

Although under pressure from Fatah not to attend the Middle East conference proposed by the United States, citing uncertainty over its participants and outcome, PA President Abbas was "very much willing" and "determined to go", but only under the condition that substantive matters would be addressed, Presidential spokesperson Ahmad Daoud said. He said that the President was frustrated by the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's request that the meeting result only in a non-binding "declaration" rather than a firm agreement, with a timetable for implementation. (Reuters, Ma'an News Agency)

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that a US-sponsored Mideast peace conference would confront "critical issues," but remained vague about what was on the agenda and who would attend. She said, "It is extremely important from our point of view that it be serious and substantive. We can't simply continue to say that we want a two-State solution. We have got to start to move toward one." (AP)

An Israeli commission was to be set up to investigate the 2002 air strike that killed Hamas leader Salah Shehade, along with 14 civilians. The prosecutor's office informed the Supreme Court that the commission would be made up of members of the military and the Shin Bet domestic security service, said an official with the Yesh Gvul (There is a Limit) organization that had demanded for years to hold officials accountable for the strike. (AFP)

Hamas had denied allegations made in Ma'ariv that they were using their power in the Gaza Strip to enforce Islamic law. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barthoum said that the newspaper's story was "lies and slander aimed at distorting the reputation of Hamas and the Executives Force, as well as damaging the security system which has been established in the Gaza Strip since Hamas took power in June". (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that security forces' operations in the West Bank would continue because they contributed to preventing attacks against Israelis. He added that he supported easing restrictions on Palestinian civilians, but roadblocks would be removed only "in line with security considerations."

(Ha'aretz)

19

In Nablus, Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian as they pursued an operation against militants in Ein Beit Elma refugee camp inside the city. Mohammed Salim, 38, whom witnesses said was a civilian with disabilities affecting his legs and one hand as a result of an Israeli air strike in 2001, was not involved in the fighting. Mr. Salim was a Hamas member and brother of Jamal Salim, a top Hamas commander killed by the IDF in 2000. An army spokesperson said that there were "exchanges of fire between the troops and armed gunmen in the camp during the night." Around 60 Israeli jeeps and bulldozers were involved as troops searched house to house for militants and weapons. An army statement said that the "IDF entered the area in order to prevent the execution of ... a terrorist attack," which it claimed was being planned by Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. (AFP, Ha'aretz)

A spokesperson for PA President Abbas said in a statement that the [Nablus] operation was "an attempt to sabotage US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to the region. The policy of destroying, killing and harming Palestinians contradicts US, Arab and international efforts to secure the peace process. Israel is responsible for continuing the cycle of violence and bloodshed." (Xinhua)

The Israeli Security Cabinet voted to declare the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory," approving, among other things, the disruption of power and fuel supplies to the area as a response to the ongoing Qassam rocket fire at Israeli targets. The ministers, however, decided not to disrupt the Gaza Strip's water supply. Also, all crossings will be closed to prevent the entry of goods and people. Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barthoum described the Cabinet decision a "declaration of war."

(Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that Israel's calling Hamas an "enemy entity" was "a clear indication of military escalation against Gaza." Another Hamas spokesperson, Taher Al-Nounou, said that his Government saw the Israeli move as "a collective punishment aimed at bowing down the Palestinian people." The decision was also meant to force the Palestinians to accept any resolution that may result from the US-proposed peace conference, he said. (*Xinhua*)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement:

I am very concerned at the decision taken today by the Israeli Government to declare the Gaza Strip an "enemy entity" and its announced intent to interrupt essential services such as electricity and fuel to the civilian population. Such a step would be contrary to Israel's obligations towards the civilian population under international humanitarian and human rights law.

The United Nations has broad humanitarian responsibilities and is mandated to provide assistance to and meet the humanitarian needs of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. There are 1.4 million people in Gaza, including the old, the young and the sick, who are already suffering from the impact of prolonged closure. They should not be punished for the unacceptable actions of militants and extremists. I call for Israel to reconsider this decision.

The continued indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza into Israel is unacceptable and I deplore it. I call for it to stop immediately. I understand Israel's security concerns over this matter.

(UN press release SG/SM/11165)

20

During an incursion into the central Gaza Strip, the IDF said one of its aircrafts attacked a vehicle carrying gunmen near its forces. Hamas said that one of its fighters was killed. After the troops had moved out, Palestinian medics found another dead body but could not immediately say if it was that of a militant or a bystander. (*AP*)

As the IDF continued its operations in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, residents from Nablus complained that they were running out of food, while a 17-year-old was killed in central Gaza. The raid inside Nablus entered its third day. An Israeli military spokesman said that the army was allowing food, medicine and ambulances into the Ein Beit Elma refugee camp. But with a tight curfew clamped on the camp since the previous day, some of the 5,000 residents said they could not leave their homes to buy food. In the Gaza Strip, health officials said that IDF troops had killed a Palestinian teenager who was hit by shrapnel from a tank shell, then run over by an army bulldozer. Dr. Moaiya Hassanain of the Health Ministry in Gaza identified the youth as 17-year-old Mahmoud Kassassi. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli forces seized nine Palestinians from different regions of the West Bank. Israeli sources said that the IDF apprehended three "wanted" Palestinians from Tulkarm, four in Ramallah, one in Nablus and one in Hebron. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

In a joint press conference with PA President Abbas, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the Middle East conference proposed by the US must be substantive, and that the two sides must draft a document before the meeting, laying the foundations for serious negotiations. "The conference has to be substantive and advance the cause of a Palestinian State... Participants must not simply meet for the sake of meeting," she said. Mr. Abbas had made clear that he wanted a deal that would go beyond previous agreements on the broad outlines of how the conflict could be resolved and would set a framework for resolving core disputes on borders, security and the status of Jerusalem and of Palestinian refugees from territory that is now Israel. Mr. Abbas also said that he would meet with President Bush during next week's United Nations General Assembly in New York and that he had informed Ms. Rice of the composition of the Palestinian negotiating team without announcing the names, but his aides said that it would be headed by former PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia. (*Ha'aretz*)

US Secretary of State Rice met Israeli President Shimon Peres in the President's residence in Jerusalem. She then travelled to Ramallah, where she said she saw "a spirit and a desire to move towards peace" among Israelis and Palestinians, but that there were "many obstacles to overcome". When asked how Secretary Rice could reconcile seemingly contradictory Israeli and Palestinian views of what the conference might achieve, a senior U.S. State Department official told reporters, "It could range from zero to a full-blown agreement. They are not in a position yet to put a label on it. Labels are really not a very good way to capture what is going on," he said, adding: "This appears to be a serious discussion about fundamental issues." (*Ha'aretz*)

The European Union expressed opposition to Israel's decision to declare the Hamas-run Gaza Strip a "hostile territory", urging Israel to reverse the decision. "We are making the same appeal as the UN Secretary-General, for Israel to reverse this decision," said the spokeswoman for EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. "We are concerned about the decision the Israeli Government has taken. The basic needs of the Palestinian population cannot be ignored," said Mr. Solana's spokeswoman, Cristina Gallach, adding "We have always said we would never abandon the Palestinian people and would do our utmost to ensure that their living conditions did not deteriorate, and we're deeply concerned that this decision will have an impact". (*AFP*)

Jordanian Government spokesperson Nasser Judeh expressed Jordan's rejection of Israel's decision to declare the Gaza Strip a hostile territory. He called for revoking this decision and said that it was important to be committed to international law as it relates to the situation of Gaza. Such a decision, he added, would not create a favourable environment to achieve progress in the peace process. (*Petra*)

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued a [statement](#) expressing alarm at the decision of the Israeli Security Cabinet to consider the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory" and to apply additional sanctions to the Territory, calling on Israel to reverse the decision. (*UN press release GA/PAL/1064*)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour expressed grave concern over the Israeli Government's decision to declare the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory". She recalled that international law prohibits reprisals and collective punishment. (www.unhcr.ch)

The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades had denied that Israeli forces seized activists during the ongoing military operation in Ein Beit Elma refugee camp, in Nablus. A spokesperson of the group said, "What the Israeli army announced about seizing activists is groundless," adding that the Israelis spread lies in order to break the spirit of Palestinian fighters. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

Former PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh had requested immediate Egyptian action to prevent expected Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. Mr. Haniyeh telephoned the Chief of the Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleiman, requesting Egypt's intervention, a day after Israel designated the Gaza Strip as a "hostile territory".

Mr. Sulaiman said that Egypt had already contacted the Israelis in an attempt to prevent massive consequences of the Israeli action. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. (*UN press release SC/9124*)

Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, speaking at a meeting of his Kadima Party, said that he would bring a proposal to his Cabinet next week to free some Palestinian prisoners who do not have "blood on their hands." He pledged to continue regular meetings with PA President Abbas "in order to reach political understandings." (*AP*)

21

The IDF arrested a Palestinian whom Israel accused of being the leader of the Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas in the Ein Beit Elma refugee camp in Nablus. The IDF said that his group was planning a suicide attack inside Israel. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hamas' Executive Force announced the arrest of a group of gunmen that had shot at their post in the Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, injuring two people. The Executive Force statement claimed that the group was taking direct orders from the Government in Ramallah. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF arrested a Palestinian in the West Bank town of Qalqilya. PA security sources said that a number of military vehicles had entered the city at dawn as soldiers carried out house to house searches. (*Ma'an News Agency*)

The IDF announced that it had imposed a full closure on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank "in light of the significant terror threat" during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. During the closure, Palestinians would only be permitted to enter Israel for humanitarian reasons. Israel turned away thousands of Palestinians who were trying to enter Jerusalem for Ramadan prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque. "Because of the complete closure of the West Bank and the fact that hundreds of our staff are prevented from getting to work in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem area, hundreds of thousands of dollars of aid money are inevitably going to be wasted," UNRWA spokesman Christopher Guinness told *AFP*. (*AFP, AP, Ha'aretz, Reuters*)

Israel should cede control over Arab neighbourhoods in Jerusalem to the Palestinians as part of a peace agreement with the Government of PA President Abbas, Israel's Vice Premier Haim Ramon told *Israel Radio*. "This annexation threatens Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people. It will bring about its transformation into a Palestinian capital with a Palestinian majority," Mr. Ramon said. "Ramon is overreaching and he lacks supervision or self-control," Defence Minister Ehud Barak stated. (*AP, Ha'aretz*)

Israeli security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that fuel supplies for cars and for Gaza Strip's power plant would be drastically reduced in the coming days, but the diesel fuel that runs hospital generators would not be affected. (AP)

"We are confident that the Israeli Government will carry out with responsibility the decision [to declare the Gaza Strip a hostile territory]," German Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Jaeger said. He noted that the Israeli Cabinet had referred to "the Gaza Strip under Hamas leadership" as hostile, not to the entire population of Gaza. In response to repeated questioning, Mr. Jaeger declined to express criticism of the Israeli decision. (DPA)

A coalition of seven Israeli human rights groups condemned the Government's decision to cut fuel and electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip, saying it would be a grave breach of the foremost principle of international humanitarian law: the obligation to distinguish between combatants and civilians. (www.btselem.org)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon named Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim a UN messenger of peace. Mr. Barenboim co-founded an orchestra that brings young Arab and Israeli musicians together. He had recently initiated a music education project in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (www.un.org/sg/mop) President Bush will meet with PA President Abbas on 24 September in New York, the White House announced. (Reuters)

A group of 35 Palestinian refugees [originally in Iraq] arrived in Brazil after spending three years in a barren and rocky encampment between Iraq and Syria. The 35 Palestinian refugees were part of a larger group of 117 that was expected to arrive by year's end. (AP)

22

Israeli security forces foiled a terrorist attack on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, an Israeli military spokeswoman said. Questioning Palestinians who had been arrested in Nablus led detectives earlier to a flat in Tel Aviv, where they found a belt of explosives that had been smuggled in batches from the West Bank. The organizers of the attack, one of whom occasionally lived in the Tel Aviv flat, wanted it to take place today, authorities said. (DPA)

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians in two incidents, leaving two Palestinian medics and a 15-year-old boy injured. Abdul-Halim Ja'afira, Director of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Bethlehem, said that the medical workers, medic Muhammad Abu Ajamiyya and ambulance driver Samir Abu Sarah were stopped near the "Nekodim" settlement at an Israeli military checkpoint. The Israeli soldiers had reportedly instructed the crew to follow a civilian vehicle into the settlement, where, Mr. Ja'afira said, they were attacked by at least seven settlers who seized the medic and "demolished" the ambulance. The driver reportedly escaped to a nearby Palestinian residence. In a separate incident in Hebron, a settler from the "Kiryat Arba" settlement stabbed 15-year-old Muhammad Asila in his back with "a sharp tool." (Ma'an News Agency)

Palestinian police stormed a village near Nablus to arrest a number of wanted criminals. Ahmed al-Sharqawy, chief of police of Nablus, said that the operation had been coordinated with the IDF and resulted in the arrest of "tens of wanted people in Houwara village." Samer Merib, head of the Houwara local council, said that the security campaign was conducted "to control the situation in the village where anarchy and disorder were the people's key concern." (DPA)

Palestinian police blocked a march by some 200 Palestinian women protesting the detention of scores of Hamas members since the movement's June takeover of the Gaza Strip. A police cordon blocked the women from marching from the Al-Bireh mosque in Ramallah, detaining three teenagers among the demonstrators. Hamas said that a woman member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who was among the protestors, had been beaten also by the police. (AFP)

Qadara Fares, a member of Fatah Central Committee, said that talks with Hamas were likely to be held following an international peace conference slated for November. "I believe the dialogue with the two movements is a certain choice, but I think it will be delayed until after the conference in the fall," he said. According to Mr. Fares, Fatah would have to reconsider its stance, which bans any dialogue with Hamas, if the conference fails to achieve any breakthrough on the issue of creating a Palestinian State. "But if such a breakthrough is achieved, then Hamas has to revise itself and be more realistic in dealing with the political development," he added. (DPA)

23

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades launched two home-made rockets at Sderot. Israeli sources said that one landed in an open area, and another landed near a highway. No damage or injuries were reported. (Ma'an News Agency)

PA President Abbas' office issued a statement underlining that the US had not yet issued formal invitations to the November Middle East peace conference. "This is under discussion between the US Administration and international and regional capitals," said the statement. President Abbas' political advisor, Nimer Hamad, said that the US would accede to the PA's demand to invite Syria and Lebanon to the conference. (Ha'aretz, Reuters)

At UN Headquarters, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed hope that key Arab nations, including Syria, would attend an international meeting on Israeli-Palestinian peace this fall hosted by US President Bush. Ms. Rice said that "invitations have not been issued yet but we would hope that the invitations would include the members of the Arab follow-up committee, charged by the Arab League with following up with the international community on an Arab Peace Initiative to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict." The committee members are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. (Ha'aretz)

The Quartet Principals met with the Quartet representative, Tony Blair, and issued a [statement](#) expressing support for the international meeting on Israeli-Palestinian peace called for by President Bush. (UN News Centre)

EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana called for more substance in talks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ahead of the November conference. Speaking ahead of the Quartet meeting at the United Nations in New York, Mr. Solana said that it was essential that progress be made.

"Water, borders, security, Jerusalem, refugees – those are the fundamental issues that have to be resolved at the end of the day," he said, adding: "We can not afford a failure." (AFP)

A long list of prominent intellectuals recently signed a petition entitled "Agreement with [PA President] Abbas, cease-fire with Hamas," calling for Prime Minister Olmert to negotiate a cease-fire with Hamas. The petition, which was published today, was organized by the sponsors of the Geneva Initiative. The list includes the novelists Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Meir Shalev, Judith Katzir, Eli Amir, Savyon Liebrecht, Yehoshua Sobol and Dorit Rabinyan. (Ha'aretz)

PA sources said that the PA had already begun policing Nablus without Israeli approval, following Israel's announcement that it had agreed to a PA request to allow the deployment of 500 police officers to enforce law and order in Nablus during daylight hours. Israel had also approved the release of 91 Palestinian prisoners, as a goodwill gesture for the holiday of Eid el-Fitr. According to a statement released by the Prime Minister Olmert's Office, roughly one-third of the prisoners to be released are Gaza Strip residents. (Ha'aretz)

In Nablus, Palestinian police arrested Sheik Maher Kharas, one of Hamas' most prominent members, as a part of its continuing crackdown on the group. (AP)

The central Gaza headquarters of the Fatah-offshoot movement Fatah Al-Yasser were set ablaze, causing damage to the building near the entrance to Bureij refugee camp. (Ma'an News Agency)

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Israeli forces seized 22 Palestinians during raids in the West Bank, 10 from the area around the city of Nablus. Separately, Israeli forces stormed the village of Deir Al-Hatab, east of Nablus, laying siege to the home of Ahmad Mash'ati, a leader in the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, threatening to demolish the building if he did not surrender. Local sources said that Israeli military vehicles invaded the village of Beit Furik, east of Nablus, seizing seven supporters of the group. The Israeli forces also stormed the village of Awarta, south of Nablus, and seized one Palestinian.

Another Palestinian was taken by Israeli soldiers from the Balata refugee camp east of Nablus. Ten Palestinians were seized around Hebron; four were detained in the village of Bani Na'im, east of the city, and one in Bit Ummar. The rest of those arrested were from the city of Hebron and the village of Dura. Other raids were reported in Jenin and Ramallah. (Ma'an News Agency)

The National Resistance Brigades, the armed wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, claimed responsibility for launching two mortar shells at the Israeli military post at Nahal 'Ozm near Gaza. (Ma'an News Agency)

The White House had confirmed that US President Bush would be meeting PA President Abbas in New York today. (Ha'aretz)

Israel welcomed a US announcement that Syria would be invited to an upcoming Middle East peace conference. The Israeli announcement came as Prime Minister Olmert said that his country was not interested in a violent conflict with Syria and expressed confidence that recent tensions between the enemy nations would subside. (AP)

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met for the first time since 2005 at UN Headquarters in New York ahead of the US-proposed peace conference. At a press conference, Norway's Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, who had chaired the meeting, said that the Ad Hoc Committee had proved to be of "political significance" in

preparation for the international conference on the Middle East in November and the upcoming donors conference in December. Mr. Støre was joined at the meeting by PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and the Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. Mr. Støre described the Committee as the structural support group of donors to the Palestinian Authority. The meeting heard presentations by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, among others, concerning the situation and the Palestinian economy. Mr. Støre said that participants supported the reform initiatives taken by Mr. Fayyad. Mr. Støre and Ms. Livni agreed that a new air of cooperation existed in the region, with a new spirit of shared goals and objectives. (UN News Centre)

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Palestinian militants continued launching home-made missiles on Israeli targets surrounding the Gaza Strip. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in a joint statement, claimed that the rockets had landed "on their target," adding that Israeli radio "has also confirmed the incident". (Xinhua)

An Israeli settler shot Iyad Fawzi Abu-Mutawi in the shoulder in the vicinity of the settlement of "Shadmot Mehola" in the northern Jordan Valley. (Wafa)

Israeli forces arrested two armed Palestinians who were trying to cross into Israel from the Gaza Strip, near the Kusufim crossing. (Ma'an News Agency)

Israeli troops arrested 15 Palestinians in various West Bank cities during overnight raids, Israeli radio reported. Palestinian security forces said that Israeli special forces arrested 32-year-old Zahi Kussa. (Xinhua)

President Bush, in his speech to the General Assembly, said, "The Palestinian Territories have moderate leaders, mainstream leaders that are working to build free institutions that fight terror, enforce the law and respond to the needs to their people. The international community must support these leaders, so that we can advance the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security". (UN News Centre)

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his address to the General Assembly, said, "Peace in the Middle East is vital to the stability of the region and the world. We know what is required: an end to violence, an end to occupation, the creation of a Palestinian State at peace with itself and Israel, and a comprehensive regional peace between Israel and the Arab world. With renewed leadership from the Arab world and the United States, coupled with efforts of Quartet Representative Tony Blair, the elements for a renewed push for peace are being brought together". (UN News Centre)

Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said, "Marwan Barghouti has a good chance of becoming the next Palestinian leader ... His release could allow the political negotiations to advance and bring about the liberation of Gilat Shalit ... All those who are thinking of Israel's security realize that there is no alternative to liberating Marwan Barghouti, as he is the strongman on the Palestinian side". He also said that Mr. Barghouti's conviction should not prevent Israel from holding talks with him. "For us he is an assassin, but Yasser Arafat was no less of an assassin, which did not prevent Yitzhak Rabin from extending his hand to him". (AFP, AP, Ha'aretz)

Israel's biggest commercial bank, Hapoalim, said it was severing business ties with Palestinian banks in the Gaza Strip in response to the Israeli Government's classification of the territory as an enemy entity. A Palestinian banking official said, "Bank Hapoalim's decision could force Gaza banks to shut down if other Israeli institutions followed suit and stopped transferring shekel notes to them". Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri called the move "a grave decision" that would have a strong impact on life in the Gaza Strip. (Ha'aretz, Reuters, Ynetnews)

Israel was to release 87 Palestinians prisoners on 2 October as a goodwill gesture. Most of the prisoners to be released were from Fatah. According to the list published in the Israel Prison Service website, none of the 87 prisoners slated for release had "blood on their hands". (DPA, Xinhua)

Israeli settlers and right-wing activists announced plans to erect five new illegal outposts across the West Bank in defiance of Israeli authorities. (AFP)

A report from the Israeli peace organization Gush Shalom revealed that thousands of Israeli settlers were ready to evacuate their settlements in the West Bank as soon as financial reimbursement was available from the Israeli Government. The report added that many of the 80,000 Israeli settlers, who lived close to the Green Line, would move immediately inside the Green Line, as they felt separated from the rest of Israel. The organization had mailed 5,000 surveys to settler families in the West Bank. (Ma'an News Agency)

Haidar Abdel Shafi, founder of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in the Gaza Strip, founder of the Palestine Liberation Organization and founder of the Palestinian National Initiative, and who led the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid International Peace Conference in 1991, died in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of Palestinians from all political factions and several organizations marched through the streets to a burial site east of the city, waving Palestinian flags. Just months before his death, Dr. Abdel Shafi was awarded the decoration of the Palestinian Star of Honour by PA President Abbas. (AFP, DPA, Reuters, Ma'an News Agency)

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Dr. Muawiya Hassanein, director of ambulances and emergencies in the Palestinian Ministry of Health, reported that 10-year-old Khalid Juway'id was injured by shrapnel when Israeli helicopters fired five missiles into the northern Gaza Strip into an area from which Islamic Jihad's Saraya Al-Quds had been launching projectiles towards Israeli targets. The Saraya Al-Quds issued a statement declaring that a group of its fighters survived an Israeli air strike in Beit Hanoun, after they launched projectiles from the area. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a mortar shell at an infantry patrol near an Israeli military post east of Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. The Al-Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades announced that they launched three mortar shells at the Israeli military post at Kerem Shalom Crossing, east of Rafah. (Ma'an News Agency)

Overnight in Nablus, the IDF arrested Ayman Zaban, the last wanted militant in connection with the killing of two IDF reservists, Yossi Avrahami and Vadim Norjitz, in 2000. In other incidents, a total of seven "wanted" Palestinians were arrested in Jenin and Ramallah. (Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency)

Four Palestinians were killed by an IDF shell in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. It was not immediately clear whether they had been armed, but the IDF said that the shelling targeted a militant cell that specialized in anti-tank combat. Palestinians said that at least 11 people were wounded in the shelling. (Ha'aretz)

Two Qassam rockets found by PA security forces near Bethlehem were not operational, an IDF official said. Upon their discovery, the rockets were transferred to IDF inspectors who said that the rockets "looked more like a pile of pipes than rockets that are about to be launched." An IDF official added that there was no evidence showing that the owners of the objects had launching capabilities. (Ha'aretz)

Israel was "getting closer" to carrying out a military operation in the Gaza Strip to counter Palestinian rocket attacks, Defence Minister Ehud Barak said on Israel's Army Radio. "It must be clear that an operation of this type is not simple, not in terms of the forces and the amount of time which we will have to stay there or in terms of the operational challenges which the troops will have to meet," Mr. Barak said. (Reuters)

Hundreds of security officials protested in Gaza City to demand months of unpaid wages from the PA. The protestors said that they were loyalists to the Fatah party. Some 400 men and women participated in the demonstration, claiming that they were victims of the rivalry between Fatah and Hamas. (AP)

Israeli forces imposed a total closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, Israeli sources said. (Ma'an News Agency)

King Abdullah II of Jordan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said, after a closed-door meeting in Amman, that the meeting proposed by US President Bush should yield "clear-cut results with a positive impact" on the peace process. They said that final status issues should be included in the agenda to finally lead to the establishment of the Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They also called on Palestinians to adopt unified stands that aptly face up to the present challenges. (www.mfa.gov.jo)

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, said that Israel should freeze construction of settlements in the West Bank and on the separation wall in order to attract Arab States to the planned peace conference in November. Attending the UN General Assembly session, he said, "There is a sense that there is something new happening and this is encouraging if it is going to prove right. We are waiting to see ... the intent to look at the final status issues and not the peripheral issues ...". (Ha'aretz)

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Seven Palestinians were killed in two separate IDF strikes on the Gaza Strip. Two Hamas members were killed early morning in an Israel Air Force (IAF) strike near Beit Hanoun. In the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City, an IAF strike on a car killed five Army of Islam members. The IDF in a statement said the car had been carrying militants and rockets that were ready to be launched at Israel. One Palestinian, wounded the previous day, died. A total of 12 Palestinians were killed within 24 hours, and at least 21 were wounded. (BBC, Ha'aretz, Ma'an News Agency, Reuters)

Eleven Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, including two that hit the town of Sderot. One of the rockets hit a house in the Negev community, causing damage but no injuries. (BBC, Ha'aretz)

Sami Abu Zuhri, Hamas spokesperson in the Gaza Strip, called on President Abbas to seriously review his positions towards Israel. "The position of Abbas and the Palestinian Authority is really negative towards what is happening in Gaza," he said, adding that "it is just collusion with Israel." Rabah Mahana, PFLP leader in the Gaza Strip said, "It is illogical that the Palestinian President or any other leader shakes hands with our enemy whose hands are stained with Palestinian blood."

(Xinhua)

Senior Israeli and Palestinian police officers were scheduled to participate in a conference organized by the EU in October as part of efforts to renew cooperation between Israel and the PA. Colin Smith, who heads the EU team advising the PA police force (EUROPOL COPPS), said that the purpose of the conference, to be held in Jerusalem, would be to renew ties between the forces and begin formulating working procedures on issues of common interest. The conference's main aim was cooperation in efforts to fight traffic accidents and traffic violations. But Mr. Smith said that he believed that ties developed at the meeting would also contribute to cooperation in other areas of policing. (Ha'aretz)

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A 21-year-old member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hussam Al-Hawayhi, was killed by Israeli artillery fire at Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

A local commander of the Army of Islam, Shadi Abu Suraya, 30, died of wounds inflicted by an Israeli air strike on the Gaza Strip in one of the operations that had killed more than a dozen people during the week, medics said. (AFP)

At least three Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli forces near a mosque in the village of Husan, west of Bethlehem. The clashes occurred when Israeli military vehicles went into the village after Friday prayers and soldiers began beating villagers with clubs and fired tear gas at them, according to local sources.

(Ma'an News Agency)

A senior Israeli security official said, on condition of anonymity: "The army is not considering an imminent operation [in the Gaza Strip], but we have not excluded such an option since we continue to see more and more rockets [being fired into Israel]." Israel Army Radio also said that the military would hold off on a full-scale operation ahead of a US-sponsored international conference expected in November. "The conference is an element we have to take into account, along with other elements, before we embark on such an operation," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai said. (AFP)

PA President Abbas told the General Assembly during its high-level debate: "There is not the slightest obstacle to promoting the holding of a peace meeting, which will take place shortly." Mr. Abbas said that he had recently met with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert to discuss pressing issues, adding that the upcoming conference would offer an opportunity to be able to settle all matters, including those having to do with Jerusalem, the return of refugees, water and security. "I reaffirm the full readiness of our people to truly come on board a peace process which will lead to a comprehensive full agreement with respect to all of the issues related to a final settlement," he said, adding that the PA would put the proposals to a popular referendum "involving the entire Palestinian people, so that they can give their view with respect to the outcomes of the conference." (UN News Centre)

UNRWA called on Israel to open crossings into the Gaza Strip and warned of a humanitarian crisis if further restrictions were imposed. "We don't believe that just having humanitarian goods coming in is enough. We need other supplies to come in. People need other things besides food and medicine," UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning-AbuZayd told reporters. "The difficulties in Gaza do tend to get worse every day," she said, adding that the Agency was preparing contingency plans should the situation deteriorate further. (AFP)

The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, calling for the implementation of its resolutions S-1/1 and S-3/1, including the dispatching of the urgent fact-finding missions. The Council also adopted a resolution on religious and cultural rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, calling on Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the religious and cultural rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to allow Palestinian worshippers unfettered access to their religious sites. (www.ohchr.org)

The Humanitarian Monitor Report for August 2007, a monthly report of key humanitarian indicators and field observations issued by the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, noted that an increasing number of Palestinians had died after being denied passage through Israeli checkpoints. The latest incident occurred in August when a 76-year-old woman with heart problems, from Barta'a a-Sharqiya in Jenin district, died after Israeli soldiers refused to allow her to pass a gate in order to reach the hospital in Jenin. It also noted that July and August had witnessed the highest total number of Israeli settler incidents against Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2007, 37 and 30 respectively, a significant increase over the previous two months and considerably higher than the 2006 monthly average of 20. Children under 18 also continued to be victims of Israeli-Palestinian violence and of conflict within the Palestinian community, with a three-fold increase in deaths in August compared to July, the report added. (UN News Centre, www.ochaopt.org)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that a total of 4,803 Palestinians had been killed in the seven years after the start of the second intifada on 29 September 2000. The fatality figures did not say how many had been killed by Israeli troops and how many had died in suicide bombings, but said that more than half of the Palestinian dead hailed from the Gaza Strip. Women accounted for 284 deaths, while 921 people were under 18 years old and 275 were over the age of 50.

Unemployment virtually doubled between September 2000 and June 2007, from 10 per cent to 19.2 per cent. At the same time, poverty increased, leaving over 30 per cent of Palestinian families under the poverty line, existing on less than \$2 per day. The economy was also affected, with the per capita income dropping by 23 per cent in the last seven years, and the consumer price index rising by a similar rate, forcing almost 20 per cent of Palestinians to immigrate to search for better work opportunities outside the Palestinian areas. (DPA)

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The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. The Al-Nasser Salah Addin Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at an Israeli town bordering the Gaza Strip. (Ma'an News Agency)

Hamas and Fatah loyalists clashed at a mosque in the southern Gaza Strip, leaving nine people wounded, including two who had been critically hurt, witnesses and medical officials said. The melee erupted after Hamas brought one of its own religious leaders to preside over evening prayers at a Khan Yunis mosque instead of the independent cleric who usually led the service, witnesses said. What began as fistfights among worshippers soon degenerated into face-offs with stones and knives. Hamas security officials who arrived at the scene fired rounds in the air, then came under fire themselves from a nearby area, witnesses said. (AP)

After talks with PA President Abbas in Lisbon, Foreign Minister Luis Amado of Portugal, which holds the current EU Presidency, said that the US-sponsored conference in November was a chance to reach an "agreement in principle that would clear the way for a future Palestinian State." "Failure in this process would be extremely dramatic and would have extraordinary consequences, in particular, in terms of strengthening extremism and radicalism, and not just in the region," he added. (AFP)

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Israeli forces arrested 11 Palestinians in Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah, including the Assistant Under-Secretary of the PA Transportation Ministry, Faydi Tamini. (Ma'an News Agency)

The IDF demolished a cattle slaughterhouse belonging to the local council of Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip. The military also destroyed several barns and sheep farms in the area. (Ma'an News Agency)

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for launching two home-made projectiles at the southern Israeli town of Sderot. In a separate incident, the National Resistance Brigades, the armed group of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Al-Aqsa Brigades claimed responsibility for launching a home-made projectile at kibbutz Nir Am. (Ma'an News Agency)

Officials said that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and PA President Abbas would meet on 3 October to try to narrow differences over a US-convened conference.

Israeli Government spokesman David Baker said that the meeting would take place in Mr. Olmert's residence in Jerusalem, with negotiating teams from either side holding their first formal talks separately. The teams would work on a "joint statement to be presented at the conclusion of the upcoming international meeting," Mr. Baker said. (Reuters)

A US official said that the Middle East peace meeting was likely to take place at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, the capital of Maryland. (Reuters)

